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The Works of Charles Paul de Kock, with a General Introduction by ...

Paul de Kock, Mary Hanford Finney Ford, Edith Mary Norris, Jules Claretie, Arthur S. Martin

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The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

WITH A GENERAL INTRODUCTION BY

JULES CLARETIE

THE BARBER OF PAR

TRANSLATED IN [illegible]

EDITH MARY NORRIS

VOLUME I

THE FREDERICK [illegible] COMPANY

BOSTON [illegible] PARIS

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The individual . . . stopped before a pretty house.

ORIGINAL ETCHING BY CHARLES H. WHITE.

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CHAPTER I

The Barber's House

Upon a certain evening in the month of December, of the year one thousand six hundred and thirty-two, a man walked at a rapid pace down the Rue Saint-Honoré and directed his steps towards the Rue Bourdonnais.

The individual appeared to be forty years old or thereabouts; he was tall as to his figure and sufficiently good-looking as to his face; the expression of the latter, however, was rather austere and at times even melancholy; and in his black eyes might sometimes be noted an ironical light, which belied the suspicion of a smile.

This ungenial personage, on the occasion of which we are writing, was wrapped, one might almost say disguised, and he looked like one who would lend his personality to disguise; he was wrapped, then, in a long brown cloak which only came down just below his knees, and he wore, drawn low down over his eyes, a broad-brimmed hat, which, contrary to the fashion of the day, was ungarnished by a single feather, but which effectually protected his face from the rain which was now beginning to fall very heavily.

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The Paris of that time was very different from the Paris of today. The condition of the beautiful capital was then deplorable; many of the streets were unpaved, many of them were only partly paved; heaps of rubbish and filth accumulated here and there before the houses, obstructing the course of the water and stopping the openings of the drains. These waters being without outlet, overflowed on all sides, forming puddles and filthy holes which exhaled miasmatic and fœtid odors. Then one might have alluded with truth to —

Paris, city of noise, of mud and of smoke.

The streets were unlighted. People carried lanterns, it is true; but everybody did not have these, nor were lanterns any defence against the robbers who existed in very large numbers, committing a thousand excesses, a thousand disorders, even in broad daylight, being only too well authorized in crime by the example of the pages and lackeys whose habit it was to amuse themselves each night by insulting the passers-by, abducting the girls, mocking at the watch, beating the sergeants, breaking in the doors of shops, and annoying the peace of the inhabitants in a multiplicity of ways, excesses against which parliament had in vain promulgated statutes, which were incessantly renewed, and just as incessantly violated with impunity.

The stealing of purses, and even of cloaks, was then a thing so common that the witnesses of the

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robbery contented themselves with laughing at the expense of the victim, without ever running after the thief. Murders were committed in broad daylight on the squares and on the walks, the criminals insulting their victims as they departed.

There were two kinds of thieves, — cutpurses and tire-laines. The first nimbly cut the strings of the purse, which it was then the habit to carry hung at the belt; the second, approaching from behind, rudely tore the passer's cloak from his shoulders.

Vainly from time to time they executed some of these criminals. These examples seemed to redouble the audacity of the vagabonds, the insolence of the pages and lackeys. Justice waxed feeble, while custom allowed each one to execute it for himself. Duels were nearly as common as robberies; it was considered a great honor to have the power to boast of having sent many people into the other world. Indubitably this was not the golden age, nor the good old times so vaunted by some poets, so regretted by those gloomy minds which admire only hoops and farthingales.

We do not pretend to write history, but we have thought it necessary to recall to the reader the state of Paris at the time in which our barber lived. Undoubtedly he has already divined, by the title alone, that the story is not of our time; for now we have in Paris many artistes in hairdressing, many coiffeurs, and many wigmakers, but we have no longer any barbers.

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The individual whose portrait we have just drawn, having reached a corner of the Rue des Bourdonnais, stopped before a pretty house on which was written in big letters, "Touquet, Barber and Bathkeeper." At that time the luxury of signs was not known, and the streets of Paris did not offer to the consideration of loiterers a character from Greek or Roman history at the front of each grocer's or haberdasher's shop. The portrait of Mary Stuart did not invite one to go in and buy an ell of calico; nor did Absalom, hung by the nape, indicate to one that he was passing a hairdresser's parlors. We have made great progress in such matters.

The man who had stopped before the barber's house would have had, no doubt, much trouble in reading what was written on the front of the shop, which was shut; for the night was dark, and, as we have already said, there were no street lamps to aid those who ventured to be out in the evening in the capital. However, he seized the knocker of the smaller door, which served as an entrance, and gave a double knock without hesitating, and as one who was not afraid of making a mistake; in fact, it was the barber himself. In a few moments heavy steps were heard, and a light shone against the lattice-work above the door, which opened, and an old woman appeared, holding a candle in her hand. She nodded, saying, —

"Good God, my dear master! you have had

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horrible weather. You must be very wet. I have been praying to my patron saint that nothing should happen to you. Oh, if one only had a secret for preserving one's self from the rain! I'm very sure there are some people who can command the elements."

The barber made no answer, but passed toward a passage which led to a lower room in which there was a big fire. On entering the apartment he began by removing his cloak and hat, from which latter escaped a mass of black hair which fell in ringlets on his collar; he unfastened a large dagger from his belt, it being then the custom not to venture out without being armed. Touquet hung the dagger over the mantelpiece, then threw himself into a wicker armchair and placed himself before the fire.

While her master rested, the old servant came and went about the room; she placed the table beside the barber's armchair, drew from a buffet a pewter cup, some plates, a cover. She placed on the table tankards containing wine or brandy, and some dishes of meat which she had prepared for the supper.

"Has anyone been here during my absence?" said the barber, after a moment.

"Yes, monsieur; first, some pages, to know the news and adventures of the neighborhood, to talk evil about everybody, and to mock at the poor women who were weak enough to listen to them.

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Oh, the young men of today are wicked. How they boasted of their conquests! Some bachelors came to be shaved, then the little dandy who's delighted to wear powder, protesting that soon everybody will wear it. Perhaps they'll powder the hair likewise; still, that may preserve it from something worse. Ah, I forgot; and that big, noisy and insolent lout who, because he has a satin doublet and a velvet mantle, a hat adorned with a fine plume, and beautiful silver points, believes that he has the right to play the master over everything."

"Ah, you're speaking about Monbart?"

"Yes, of that same. He made a great shouting when he found you were not here. He said that since monsieur is rich he neglects his business."

"Why should he meddle with it?"

"That's just what I thought, monsieur. M. le Chevalier Chaudoreille also came. He fought a duel yesterday in the little Pré-aux-Clercs and killed his adversary, and he had still another duel for this evening. Blessed Holy Virgin! that men should kill each other like that, and often for some mere trifle."

"Let them fight as much as they please; it's of little importance; it's not my business. Did anybody else come?"

"Oh, the gentleman who is so droll that he makes me laugh, and whom I have sometimes

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seen play in the farces which everybody runs to see at his theatre in the Hôtel de Bourgogne,— M. Henry Legrand."

"Why don't you say Turlupin?"

"Well, Turlupin, since that's the name they give him at the theatre, and by which he's also known in the city. He does not make one melancholy. He came with that other who plays with him, and acts, they say, the old men, and delivers the prologues which precede the pieces."

"That's Gautier-Garguille?"

"Yes, monsieur, that's his name. He wanted to be shaved, bathed and have his hair dressed; but as you were not here, one of them played the barber and shaved his comrade; then the other took the comb and soapball and rendered him the same service. I wished at first to prevent them, but they wouldn't listen to me; if they didn't make me sit in the shop and talk downright nonsense about scent and soap. Some people who in passing had recognized Turlupin and his companion stopped before the shop; presently the crowd grew dense, and when they wanted to leave they could not find a way through; but you know Turlupin is never embarrassed, and, having uselessly begged the curious to let them pass, he went into the back shop and brought a bucketful of water, which he emptied entirely upon the crowd. Then you can imagine, monsieur, the excitement, the shouts of everybody. Turlupin and Gautier-

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Garguille profited by the confusion to make their escape."

"And Blanche," said the barber, who appeared to listen impatiently to old Marguerite's story,— "I hope that she was not downstairs when these merry-andrews attracted such a crowd about my house."

"No, monsieur, no; you know very well that Mademoiselle Blanche seldom comes down to the shop, and never when there is anybody there. Today, as you were away, she did not leave her room, as you had advised her."

"That's well; that's very well," said the barber.

Then he drew near the fire, supporting one of his elbows on the table, and appeared to fall again into reflection without listening to the chatter of his servant, which continued as if her master were paying the greatest attention to her.

"Mademoiselle Blanche is a charming girl; oh, yes, she is a charming child, — pretty, very pretty. I defy all your court ladies to have more beautiful eyes, or a fresher mouth, or whiter teeth; and such beautiful hair, black as jet and falling below her knees. And with all that, so sweet, so frank, without the least idea of coquetry. Ah, she is candor, innocence, itself. Of course, she's not yet sixteen years old; but there are many young girls at that age who already listen to lovers. What a pity if such a treasure as that should fall into the claws

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of a demon! But we shall save her from that. Yes, yes; I'm sure of it. I shall do all that's necessary for that, for it's not enough to watch over a young girl; the devil is so malicious, and all these bachelors, these students, these pages, are so enterprising, without counting the young noblemen, who make no scruple of abducting young girls and women, and for all compensation give a stroke of the sword, or cause to be whipped by their lackeys, those who complain of their treatment. Good Saint Marguerite! what a time we live in! One must allow one's self to be outraged, offended, robbed even,—yes, robbed,—for if you should have taken your man in the act, if you demand justice, they will ask you if you yourself were a witness to it. If you say no, they will dismiss the guilty person, and if you say yes, they will first find out if you have the means of paying the expenses of the law, in which case you may have the pleasure of seeing the thief flogged before your door, and that will cost you a heap. But if it is someone with a title who has offended you, it's necessary for you to be silent about it, unless you wish to finish your days at the Bastile or at the Châtelet."

Marguerite was silent for some minutes, awaiting a response from her master. Receiving none, she presumed that he tacitly approved of all she was saying, and resumed her discourse.

"Finally, they pretend that it's always been

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thus. They hang the little ones, the bigger ones save themselves, and the biggest mock at everyone. One's ill advised to go to law now that the advocates and the attorneys drag a lawsuit along for five or six years, receiving money from all hands, so as to maintain their wives and their daughters in luxury, playing the Jew to ruin their poor clients. As to the sergeants, they run all over to find criminals; but if they arrest some thieves, they let them go very quickly, for fear that the latter will give them some money. Poor city! Don't we hear a frightful noise every night? And still we're in the best neighborhood. And that does not prevent them from committing vandalisms, robberies, murders. There are shouts, a clash of arms; what is the use of provosts, sheriffs, sergeants, archers, if the police do so badly? It's not the merchants I pity; they'll give themselves to the devil for a sou; they sell their goods for four times more than they cost; to draw customers, they allow every passer-by to go into their shops, leaving them at leisure to chat with their women, to take them by the chin, to talk soft nonsense, to make love to their face, — all that to sell a collar, some rouge, a dozen of needles. It's a shame to see everything that goes on amongst us. If I go to market to get my provisions, I'm surrounded by thieves who amuse themselves by stealing from the buyers and the sellers; they rummage in the creels and baskets, then they sing

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in my ears indecent and obscene songs. Good Saint Marguerite! where are we in all this? The scholars, more debauched than ever, insulting, pillaging, doing a thousand wickednesses; the young men of family who haunt the gambling-dens, the drinking-houses, always armed with daggers or swords. Ah, my dear master, Satan has taken possession of our poor city and will make us his prey."

Marguerite stopped anew and listened. The barber still kept the deepest silence, but he was not asleep. Several times he had passed his right hand over his forehead and pushed back his curls. For those who love to talk, it is much the same whether they are listened to or believe themselves to be listened to. The old servant was enjoying herself; she did not often find so good an opportunity to talk, and she began again after a short pause: —

"Thanks to Heaven, I am in a good house, and I can say with pride that, during the eight years that I have lived with monsieur, nothing has passed contrary to decency and good manners. I remember very well that when they said to me, eight years ago, 'Marguerite, M. Touquet, the barber-bathkeeper of the Rue des Bourdonnais, is looking for a servant for his house,' I considered it twice. I beg your pardon, monsieur; for bathkeepers' houses and lodging-houses don't have a very good reputation. But they said to me, 'M.

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Touquet is in easy circumstances now; he doesn't take lodgers; he is contented to exercise his calling in the morning, and for the rest he hardly ever sees anybody at his house, where he is carefully educating a little girl whom he's adopted.' My faith! that decided me, and I've not had cause to repent my decision. If there come in the morning to the shop a crowd of men of all professions, not one of them penetrates to the interior of the house. Monsieur does his business honorably, I am proud to say; and that which I admire above all is the interest which he bears for the orphan he has taken under his care, for I believe that monsieur has told me that she is an orphan. Yes, monsieur has told me so. She surely merits all that anyone can do for her, that dear Blanche; but I believe I have not told monsieur by what means I preserve her from the snares that wait for innocence. Oh, it's a secret, it's a marvellous secret, which I shall confide to monsieur. The neighbor opposite the silk merchant told me how to make it; it is a little skin of vellum, on which some words are written; then one signs it, and it becomes a talisman to prevent all misfortunes. Queen Catherine de Médicis had a similar one which she wore always; the talisman which I have given to Mademoiselle Blanche, very far from attracting evil spirits, should make them fly from a place and prevent the effect of all sorceries which anyone could employ to triumph over her virtue.

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Oh, the precious talisman, monsieur! Alas! if I had had one eight years ago! — But you don't sup, monsieur; haven't you any appetite?"

Touquet rose abruptly and went to look at a wooden timepiece which stood at the end of the room.

"Nine o'clock," said the barber impatiently; "nine o'clock, and he has not come."

"Why, are you waiting for someone, monsieur?" said the old servant in surprise.

"Yes; I'm waiting for a friend. Put another drinking-cup on the table; he will sup with me."

"I very much doubt whether he will come," said Marguerite, while executing her master's orders; "it's late and the weather is frightful; one must be very bold to risk himself in the streets at this hour."

At this moment somebody knocked violently at the door of the passageway, and the barber, smiling to himself, cried,—

"It is he!"

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CHAPTER II

The Great Nobleman and the Barber

On hearing the knock old Marguerite started affrightedly and looked at her master, as she faltered,—

"Must we open the door at this time of night, monsieur?"

"Of course, haven't I told you already that I was waiting for a friend?" replied the barber, putting some more wood on the fire, "go to the door at once."

The old servant was very fearful; she stood and hesitated; but a single look from her master decided her; she took a lamp and directed her steps towards the corridor which opened into the passageway of the house. Marguerite was sixty-eight years old; work and the weight of years had long since bent her body and deprived her limbs of their natural agility; she could only walk slowly, and the high heels of her large slippers made a uniform flapping noise which the poor old handmaid could not prevent and of which she was, indeed, unconscious.

The good woman had shuffled as far as the middle of the passageway, when another knock, louder

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than the first one, shook all the windows of the house.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" said Marguerite; "he's in a great hurry. Which of my master's friends would allow himself to knock in that manner? There are some panes broken, I'm sure. Can it be Chaudoreille? Oh, no; he only gives a very soft little knock. Turlupin? Of course not; I should hear him sing in the street. Besides, he's not my master's friend. Ah, I'm very curious to know who it can be."

Despite her curiosity Marguerite did not advance more quickly. However, she arrived at the door, and, having mentally recommended herself to her dear patron saint, she decided to open it.

A man wrapped in a large cloak which he held against his face, his head covered with a hat ornamented on the edge with white feathers, and drawn well down over his eyes, so that no one could see them, appeared at the end of the passageway, and asked in a loud voice if this was Barber Touquet's house.

"Yes, monsieur," said Marguerite, trying, but in vain, to discover the features of the person before her. "Yes, this is it; and it's you, no doubt, for whom my master's waiting."

"In that case conduct me to him," said the stranger.

Marguerite closed the door and bade the unknown follow her. While guiding him along the

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passageway and the long corridor which they had to traverse, she turned often and held her lamp to the stranger, under the pretence of lighting him, but in fact to try to see something by which she could recognize the person whom she had introduced into the house. Her efforts were in vain. The stranger walked with his head down, holding his cloak against his face. Marguerite was reduced to examining his boots, which were white, with turned-over mushroom-shaped tops, and garnished with spurs. This seemed to indicate a refined dress; but many men then wore similar ones, and this part of his dress could not help Marguerite in her conjectures. They reached the lower room, and the stranger entered with a light step, while the servant said to her master, —

"Here's the person who knocked. I do not know if it is the friend you were waiting for; I was not able to see him."

The barber did not allow Marguerite time to finish her phrase. He ran toward the stranger and made him come to the fire, saying to him, —

"Thou hast arrived at last, then. I feared that the night, that the bad weather — But place thyself here; we will sup together."

"Good," said the servant to herself; "in order for him to sup it will be necessary for him to remove his mantle, and I shall at last be able to see his face. I don't know why, but I have the greatest curiosity to know this man. If it is one of my

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master's friends, it must be that he has come here very rarely. I did not recognize his voice; his height is ordinary, — rather tall than short; he should be young. Yes, he's not a scholar; however, I bet he's a pretty fellow; by his walk I judge him to be a military man. We shall see if I'm mistaken."

The old maid did not take her eyes from the stranger, who had thrown himself on a chair, and made no sign that he wished to relieve himself of his cloak and hat, both of which were drenched with rain.

"If monsieur desires it," said Marguerite, approaching the stranger's chair, "I will relieve him of his cloak, which is all wet; and I can dry it while he is supping."

"It is unnecessary," said the barber, putting himself precipitately between the old woman and the stranger, who had not stirred; "we have no need of your services. Leave us, and go to rest; I will shut the street door myself when my friend leaves."

Marguerite seemed petrified on receiving this order. She looked at her master, and was about to allow herself to indulge in some observations; but the barber fixed his eyes upon her, and Master Touquet's eyes had at times an expression which compelled obedience.

"Leave us," said he again to his servant; "and above all, do not come down again."

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Marguerite was silent. She took her lamp, bowed to her master and turned to leave the room, throwing a last glance on the man of the mantle, who remained motionless before the fire and whose features she could not see. She was obliged to go to bed without being able to base her conjectures on facts, without knowing if she had rightly divined the age, the condition, the face of the unknown. What a punishment for the old maid! But her master pointed with his finger to the door of the room, and Marguerite went at once.

As soon as the old servant had departed, and when the sound of her steps was no longer heard, the stranger burst into a shout of laughter and threw his hat and his cloak far from him. Then one perceived a man of thirty-six years or thereabouts; his features were fine, noble and spirituel. His brown mustache was lightly outlined above his mouth, which in smiling disclosed very beautiful teeth. His expressive eyes, in turn tender, proud and passionate, denoted one who was in the habit of expressing all his sentiments; but the disgust, the weariness, which were depicted also on the pale and worn features of the stranger seemed to indicate that, having once indulged his passion, it was only with an effort that he could bring himself to experience it again.

His costume was rich and tasteful; the color of his doublet was a light blue; silver and silk were blended on the velvet which formed the founda-

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tion; superb lace bordered the collar which fell on his shoulders; a large white belt surrounded his figure, and a sword ornamented with precious stones glittered at his side.

Since the departure of his servant the barber had changed his tone toward the stranger. Respect, humility, had replaced the familiarity which Touquet had affected in Marguerite's presence.

"Deign to excuse me, monsieur le marquis," said he, bowing profoundly to his guest, "if I permitted myself to be too familiar, with my thee-ing and thou-ing; but it was only according to your orders, the better to deceive my servant and prevent her from having any suspicions as to your rank."

"That's all right, my dear Touquet," said the marquis, displaying himself before the fire; "I assure you I had the greatest trouble to maintain my gravity before the poor woman, who did not know by what ruse she could see my face, which would not have been a very great matter, for it is hardly presumable that she would have known me."

"No, monseigneur, she does not know you; I think so at least, for M. le Marquis de Villebelle has made so much talk about himself with his gallantry, his conquests, his feats of arms. His name has become so famous, his adventures have made so much noise, that the lowest classes of society know him, — the bugbear of fathers, of tutors, of

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husbands, of lovers even; for monseigneur knows no rival. Your name is spoken with terror by all the men, and makes all the women sigh, some with hope and the others in remembrance; besides, as monsieur le marquis sought pleasure wherever he found beauty, since he sometimes stooped to the humble middle classes, and has deigned to honor with his regards some pretty shop girl or simple villager, it would not be impossible that my old Marguerite might have served with some house where monsieur le marquis had left souvenirs. It was, therefore, much better that she should not see monseigneur when he came to my house incognito."

"Yes, certainly; I wish to remain unknown; it is necessary now that I should put more mystery into my love affairs. Be seated, Touquet; I have many things to tell you."

"Monseigneur—"

"Be seated; I wish it. Here I lay aside my rank and my grandeur; in you I see the first confidant of my loves, the clever servant of my passions, the audacious rascal for whom gold excited the imagination, and who knew no obstacle when a purse filled with pistoles was the recompense of his services. You are still the same, I am certain."

"Ah, monsieur, age makes us more reasonable. Seventeen years have passed since I had the honor of serving you for the first time; but since that time my head is steadier; I have learned to reflect."

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"Do you wish to become an honest man? But it is not more than ten years ago that you were serving me; you were still a knave then. Does your conversion date from that epoch?"

"Monsieur le marquis is incessantly joking. He calls those services knaveries which I rendered to him because I was so strongly attached to him."

"Call it what you will, it matters little to me. It's not necessary with me, Master Touquet, to play the hypocrite, and man of scruples. In fact, are you disposed to be useful to me? Is your genius extinguished, and will gold no longer resuscitate it?"

"To serve you, monsieur le marquis, I shall be always the same; you need not doubt my zeal or my devotion."

"All in good time. That is all that I ask of you; be a saint with other people if that pleases you, but see that I always find you the same to me as you were formerly."

Touquet did not answer, but he turned his head and his features seemed to grow sad. However, he soon recovered himself and turned smilingly toward his guest, who was tapping the wall of the chimney with his feet, and who remained for some time silent, as if he had forgotten that he was still at the barber's. The latter waited with impatience for the marquis to resume his discourse. At the end of five minutes the noble seigneur broke the silence.

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"My dear Touquet, when I recall the events of my life to my memory, I am truly astonished that I am still in the world. Why, during all this time, has not the dagger of a jealous husband or father fallen upon my head? How many men have sworn to ruin me! And the women, — if all those I have betrayed had executed their projects of vengeance! Thanks to Heaven, we are not in Italy or in Spain; and, while we have among the French some vindictive spirits, who hold rancor toward one who has betrayed them, the total is small. Inconstancy is not an unforgivable crime among these ladies, who deign sometimes to put themselves in our places and say they would not have done differently to us."

"Certainly, monseigneur, your life, at least since I have had the honor to be attached to you, has been a continued series of very spicy adventures, and some very dangerous ones. Abductions, seductions, duels, attacks with force, made openly, — nothing stopped you when you had resolved upon anything. Could you find any obstacles? Rich, noble, generous, fortune and nature have done everything for you, monsieur le marquis. You have profited by it; you have enjoyed life; many men have envied you your good fortune."

"My good fortune! Do you truly imagine that I have been happy?"

"And what should have prevented your being so, monseigneur?"

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"Nothing; and that is perhaps why weariness and disgust have often attacked me in the midst of the pleasures, the voluptuousness, I have tasted. Sometimes, without doubt, I have felt happiness, but it has been so short and has fled so rapidly. The appearance of beauty has inflamed my senses and made my heart palpitate. The charming sex, which I idolize, has always exercised an absolute empire over me. At the sight of a pretty woman I love, or at least believe I love; but no sooner are my desires satisfied than my love expires, and I am obliged to seek a new object to reanimate my benumbed senses."

"Happily, this capital contains any quantity of pretty faces; the city and the court afford you sufficient to vary your pleasures."

"Sentiment and memory are alike exhausted. I fear that, having once had force to take fire, my poor heart has become like those imperfect gun flints on which the hammer strikes without effect. I am tired of the intrigues of the court, which are even easier than the others. Where do you think I could find something more spicy? There everything is done with etiquette, and everyone is so polished. We know life too well to get angry at the least infidelity; one leaves or one takes with the most profound obeisances, and this wearies one to death; courtiers have nothing new to offer one. What should I accomplish in Marion de Lorme's circle? I should see always the same faces. When

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the Cardinal had made her fashionable, I didn't find the woman so witty that one would wish to have anything to do with her. How different with this young and beautiful Ninon! People will long speak of her; her name will go down the centuries. But she has too much wit and too little love, for me. My heart, cold before its time, needs to come in contact with a passionate heart in order to rewarm itself. In the city one does not fare much better with the women. The little bourgeoises have become coquettes. Still, if they only knew how to be cruel; but a name, a figure, a rich cloak, seems to turn their heads. The merchants know how to rob us, and the grisettes entice us; and in the midst of all that the husbands are so kind, so complacent; they fear us as they would fire; our titles render them mute; of honor they are hopeless. If this continues, it will be necessary to make love à la turque; we should only have then to throw the handkerchief."

"Then, monsieur le marquis, one always has the resource of wisdom; and, since I have not had the honor of serving you for ten years, without doubt you have acquired that."

"My faith, yes; for it's not necessary to speak of common adventures, which are not worth the trouble of reciting. I have been in the army; I have been in battle; that afforded me much pleasure, and I would willingly have stayed there much longer; but peace is made, I have returned, I have

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visited my lands, and have laughed with some little peasants who were sufficiently pleasing, but so awkward, so simple. By the way, I forgot to tell you; I married."

"Married! What, monseigneur! you?"

"Undoubtedly; my marriage was very necessary; my rank, my place at the court — and then I was overloaded with debt. That didn't make me uneasy; but they had arranged this marriage; the Cardinal, the Queen herself, desired it. I married the daughter of the Count of Laroche. My wife was very good, of very sweet character; she didn't trouble herself about my intrigues; she had what was necessary to me. I loved her — very honestly, as one can love his wife; but she died two years ago and left me no heir, which is intensely disagreeable. I had an idea that I should love children very much."

"Then you are a widower, monsieur?"

"Yes; and I find myself the possessor of a considerable fortune, very well considered at court, in favor with the Cardinal, and even able to obtain, should I desire it, the most important employment."

"I conceive, then, that monsieur le marquis wishes more secrecy in his love affairs."

"Ah, my poor Touquet, I don't believe that ambition will ever have much charm for me, but nobody knows; and there are some convenances at the court which one must not break; besides,

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secrecy lends a charm to the most simple act. But why have you not enrolled yourself under Hymen's flag? I find that you are more thoughtful, less cheerful, less lively, than formerly."

"No, monsieur le marquis; I am still a bachelor."

"Oh, well, I believe you are better so. In your position a wife would restrain you, — you who are so clever, so discreet, in conducting an intrigue. Women are so curious; she would want to know everything, which would be troublesome for you. Besides, you have never been very gallant; you care for nothing but gold. It is your god, your idol; a well-filled purse makes you inventive, capable of working marvels. It's true that you play with it a quarter of an hour afterwards and at dice or cards soon increase the fruit of the efforts of your genius."

"Ah, monseigneur!"

"Yes, you are as big a gambler as you are a knave; I remember it very well. Perhaps in ten years you have become wiser; I almost believe so, for you appear in very easy circumstances, and this house does not indicate poverty; this servant, this supper served for you — The deuce! I must taste your wine."

"Ah, monseigneur, it is not worth offering to you."

"I always like best that which is not offered to me."

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While he was saying these words the marquis filled one of the cups with wine and swallowed it at a draught.

"Really, it's not so very bad."

"Ah, monseigneur, if it were on your table—"

"Then I should find it detestable; but what will you have? Variety is the spice of life. And you have become rich, then?"

"No, not rich, but well enough off to buy this house."

"What! the house belongs to you?"

"Yes, monsieur le marquis."

"Deuce take it, Master Touquet, it must be that you have made some big hauls in order to become a proprietor."

The barber's face contracted; his black eyebrows frowned and almost met; he slowly rolled his eyes around him, and murmured with an effort, —

"Monsieur le marquis, I swear to you—"

"O mon Dieu! I do not ask you to swear, my poor Touquet," said the marquis, laughing. "You are as uneasy as if you had become a lieutenant in crime. Do you think that I came here to inquire as to the manner in which you made your fortune? But by all the devils, I do not believe that you earned this house in your barber shop."

"Monseigneur, I assure you that my economies—"

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"Yes, that's all very well; let's leave all that and speak of the subject which brought me here, for, of course, I came to you for something, and I'll be damned if I remember what it was."

The barber appeared to breathe more freely; his face assumed its habitual expression, and he raised his eyes to the marquis, who seemed to throw aside his insolence to explain the motive of his nocturnal visit.

"When I saw you this morning on the Pont-Neuf, I was following a young girl, a pretty little puss; without being a perfect beauty, she was graceful and interesting in appearance, with sparkling and very intelligent eyes. I do not believe that we should have much trouble in making a conquest of her. However, she walked faster, and would not answer any of my compliments. I carefully wrapped myself in my cloak, not wishing to be recognized by our amiable profligates, who would have made sport of me for running after a grisette. The little girl stopped to listen for a moment to Tabarin's songs, and it was while she was before the quack that I saw you and recognized you immediately; you have one of those faces that nobody forgets."

"I had also recognized you, monseigneur, in spite of the cloak in which you were enveloped; for ten years have not changed your features, monsieur le marquis, and one could not easily mistake that noble figure which captivates all the belles."

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"You flatter me, rascal; which means that I have aged. But let's go on. As soon as you had given me your address, I returned to the side of the little one."

"If monsieur le marquis had explained to me this morning what he was after, I would have spared him the trouble of following this young girl."

"No, I had a good opportunity of examining her further; besides, I had nothing else to do. She took the road to the city, which she entered by the Rue de la Calandre, I still talking to her; she only smiled, without answering me, but her look was not severe. At last she stopped before a perfumer's shop; I wished to go in with her, but she opposed me, saying in a very singular tone, 'Monsieur le Marquis de Villebelle is too well known for him to go into this shop with me; I should lose my reputation, and I beg monsieur le marquis not to compromise me.' Well now, my dear, Touquet, can you imagine this grisette who pretends that I should cause her to lose her reputation? As for me, I confess that I was so much surprised by finding myself known to the young girl and hearing her speak thus, that I remained like a fool in the middle of the street; meanwhile my beautiful conquest had entered, and disappeared by the back of the shop."

"As I told you, monseigneur, you are known in all classes of society; even a young girl of

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twelve years is as much afraid of you as she would be of Count Ory of gallant memory."

"Better and better! Women are always curious to know these men who have been pictured to them as so dangerous. Poor parents! When they tell them to fly from me, it makes them run after me. Here, Touquet; here's some gold. You will see this young girl, then; since she knows who I am, you cannot easily promise her that I will be faithful. No matter; promise her anyhow. In three days let me find her at my little house in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine; you know it."

"Yes, monseigneur; I remember it; it is the one that you formerly possessed."

"Yes; but I have made it a delightful retreat. You shall see it; pictures, mirrors, marble, alabaster, are there mingled with silk, velvet and the most precious stuffs. I have spent more than fifty thousand francs upon it. Oh, it is divine! I have had some charming suppers there with Montglas, Chavagnac, Villempré, Monteille, and some other profligates of the court."

"Was it not there, monsieur le marquis, that I led that young girl whose abduction made such an uproar? That was, I believe, our first affair of this kind; you were then a little more than nineteen years of age; and the little girl —"

"Why the devil do you recall that?" said the marquis, making an angry movement, and pressing in his hand the purse he was about to take

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from his belt, and on which the barber had already laid avaricious eyes.

"Pardon, monsieur le marquis," said Touquet; "but I did not think I should displease you in recalling the adventure which commenced your reputation. The young person was beautiful and good, and the father, one of King Henry's old archers, did not understand joking. His arquebus was aimed at you, the ball went through your hat; but your sword stopped the old man, and he fell at your feet, while I bore off in my arms his insensible daughter."

"Be silent, wretch," cried the marquis, suddenly rising, and looking angrily at the barber, who received his glances with perfect indifference.

The conversation was again interrupted; the marquis walked rapidly up and down the room, and appeared buried in his reflections; soon, however, broken words escaped him, but they were not addressed to Touquet. The marquis seemed violently agitated as he said in a low voice, —

"Poor Estrelle! what has become of you? She loved me — she believed me to be a simple student. I loved her also; yes, never since that time have I experienced a feeling which I can compare with the love with which she inspired me. I was young — ah, Heaven is my witness that I did not wish to fight with her father. Thanks to Heaven, his wound was very trifling and was soon cured; but Estrelle, when she learned my name and that

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event, cursed me. Yes, I believe I can hear her still. Then she escaped from that house where I had hidden her. I love her still. Since that time I have never heard of her; and you, Touquet,— have you never met her since?"

"Never, monseigneur; I have neither seen her nor heard her speak."

"Poor Estrelle!" said the marquis after a moment; and the barber added in a low tone,—

"She would now be thirty-four years of age, or very near that."

This remark appeared to lessen somewhat the marquis' regret.

"In fact," said he, again approaching the fire, "she would be nearly that age if she were living, and would not appear the same to me as the one I formerly knew. How time passes! Come, let's forget all that; after all, it is much the same as any other adventure,—a chapter in the history of my life."

"And did the marquis say that the young girl lived in the Rue de la Calandre in the city?"

"The young girl? What young girl?"

"The one monseigneur followed this morning."

"Yes, to be sure; I had forgotten. You will easily recognize her: her figure unconstrained, her walk brisk; twenty years or thereabouts, I presume; nut-brown hair, black eyes, beautiful teeth, her skin a little brown. I do not think she's French. Something lively in her countenance;

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nothing that indicates timidity or simplicity. This is all the information which I can give you."

"It is sufficient, monseigneur; in two days I hope that the young person will be at your little house."

"That's very good. — Wait; this is for your expenses, and I promise you as much more if you are successful."

While saying these words the marquis threw on the table the purse filled with gold, which he still held in his hand, and a smile escaped the lips of the barber. His guest resumed his cloak and replaced his hat on his head.

"It is late," said the marquis, wrapping himself in his mantle, "and I must go home. The day after tomorrow, toward ten o'clock, I will return to learn the result of your proceedings."

"Shall I find anybody at your little house?"

"Yes, Marcel, one of my people, a devoted servant who lives there constantly. I will warn him."

"That is enough, monseigneur, and I hope that you will be pleased with me on this occasion."

"I leave it all to your zeal; in fact, the little one is very pleasing, and ought to amuse me for some time. Come, my dear Touquet, let us follow our destiny. Gallantry, voluptuousness, pleasure, — that is my life; that is the road which I follow where my passions lead me. I should not know how to follow any other walk now; like a blind man who trusts in Providence, I do not know if

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this road will lead me to happiness; but I cannot turn aside from it."

The marquis turned his steps toward the door, and Touquet proposed to his distinguished guest that he should guide him to his dwelling.

"Thank you," said the marquis, "it is unnecessary; I have my sword, and I fear nothing."

While uttering these words the marquis had plunged into the street and disappeared from the barber's sight. The latter closed the door and returned to the little room. Arrived there, he hastened to take the purse which lay on the table; he counted the pieces which it contained, nor could he raise his eyes from the sight of the gold. But soon a dull, melancholy sound was heard; it was Saint-Eustache's clock striking two. The barber turned pale; his hair seemed to stand up on his head; he threw about him gloomy glances, as if he feared to perceive some frightful object; then he placed the purse in his bosom, took a lamp and went toward the door at the end of the room, murmuring in a sad voice,—

"Two o'clock! Let's go to bed. Ah, if I could only sleep!"

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CHAPTER III

Blanche. A History of Sorcerers

The welcome day had succeeded to the long and rainy night; the merchants had opened their shops, the watchmen were taking their much-needed rest after their fatiguing nocturnal duties, while the more hardy robbers of the darkness had given place to the sneaking pickpockets and thieves who exercised their calling in broad daylight in the most populous quarters. The servant maids were up and about, briskly performing their morning tasks; husbands left the nuptial couch, for then it was usual for one to sleep with his wife, at least among middle-class people, to betake themselves to their daily avocations; wives and mothers were attending to the needs of their households and their children; lovers who had dreamt of their sweethearts went to endeavor to realize some of their dreams; and the young girls who always thought of their sweethearts whether they were sleeping or waking, went, thinking of them still, to their daily work. In that time, as in this, love was the dream of youth, the distraction of the middle-aged, and the memory of the old.

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The barber was always the first to rise in the house. He had no servants, although his means would well have allowed it; but when anyone asked him why he did not take a boy to help him and to watch in the shop, Touquet answered, —

"I do not need anyone; I can conduct my business alone, and I'm not fond of feeding idlers who are good for nothing but to spy on their master's actions and go and talk about them in the neighborhood."

The barber knew that Marguerite, though a little curious and somewhat of a gossip, was incapable of disobeying him in anything; she went out to buy the necessary provisions for the house, then she went upstairs again to the young girl of whom we have heard her speak, and with whom we shall soon have a better acquaintance. Marguerite went down only when her master was absent, which was rarely. Finally, the barber could not dispense with a maid since he had taken the little Blanche to grow up under his roof.

Touquet himself opened his shop; he looked up and down the street, but it was yet too early for customers to come. The barber was dreamy, preoccupied; he was thinking of the commission which had been given him by the marquis; then he returned indoors, saying, —

"Chaudoreille is late this morning; however, it's his day to be shaved."

Marguerite appeared at the entrance to the

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room; and, after looking about her on all sides, perhaps to assure herself that the stranger of the night before was not still there, she greeted her master respectfully, and said to him, —

"Monsieur, Mademoiselle Blanche is up and wishes to know if she may come and say good-morning to you."

The barber still threw a glance into the street; then he passed into his back shop, saying to his servant, —

"Blanche may come."

Marguerite had hardly made a sign to someone in the passage when a young girl, light as a deer and fresh as a rose, sprang into the little room where Touquet was waiting, and ran toward him with the most lovely smile, saying to him, —

"Good-morning, my good friend!"

Then she offered Touquet her candid forehead, and the barber approached her and brushed it lightly with his lips. One would have said that a painful feeling restrained him, and that he feared to wither that tender flower.

Marguerite's portrait had not flattered Blanche. The young girl was as pretty as she appeared innocent and ingenuous. Her dark hair, smoothed in bands on her forehead, fell in ringlets on her right shoulder. Powder, which the court ladies had then begun to use, had not spoiled Blanche's beautiful tresses. Her skin accorded perfectly with her name. Her mouth was fresh and tender;

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and her blue eyes, shaded by long lashes, had an innocent and sweet expression, as rare then as now.

What a pity that her pretty body should be imprisoned in a long corset, the bones of which seemed forcibly to compress its charms! But it was then the fashion. Today we have better taste; we wish that the figure should be in its place; we wish, above all, to be able to embrace it without being hindered by farthingales, basquines, paniers or hoops. Happily, the ladies are of our opinion, and everybody gains thereby.

Despite her long figure, straight corset, frilled sleeves, and her high-heeled shoes, Blanche was no less pretty. Beauty adorns everything that it wears, and innocence lends a more bewitching and genuine charm to beauty. Blanche had, then, every quality which could please. However, the barber did not appear to remark the attractions of the young girl; one would have said that he feared to look at her, as he had feared to touch his lips to her forehead.

"Did you have a good night?" asked Blanche of him.

"Very good, I thank you."

"Marguerite was afraid that you went to bed very late because you had one of your friends to supper with you."

"I don't know why Marguerite should make such a remark, nor what necessity there was that she should tell you I had anyone here last night."

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While uttering these words Touquet looked severely at Marguerite, who dusted and wiped the furniture without daring to look at her master.

"But, my dear," answered Blanche, "is there anything bad in one's supping with one of his friends?"

"Undoubtedly not."

"What harm, then, has Marguerite done in telling me that?"

"A servant should not incessantly tell tales about everything her master does. It should be very indifferent to you, Blanche, whether anyone comes to see me in the evening or not."

"Oh, mercy, yes, since you won't let me come down, though that would amuse me much better than staying in my room."

"A young girl should not talk to everybody, and many people come here of whom I know very little."

"Yes, in the morning; but in the evening you only receive your friends."

"I receive very few visitors in the evening except Chaudoreille, whom you know."

"Oh, yes; and he makes me laugh every time I see him, for he will give me lessons in music, and I believe at the present time I know much more about it than he does. You will never let me leave my room."

"Blanche, isn't it apparent to you that that is not convenient?"

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"But when you are alone I should like much better to keep you company and chat to you, than to listen to Marguerite's stories, which often make me very timorous and prevent me from going to sleep."

"You know that I'm not very chatty; after a day's work I'm tired and I like to rest."

"And Marguerite said that you didn't go to bed until very late, that you kept the light burning a long time, and that she doesn't know if you sleep one hour every night."

The old servant coughed, but unsuccessfully, to make Blanche stop talking; but the latter, not thinking that she had done anything wrong in repeating all that, paid no attention to her and continued to speak. Marguerite, in order to avoid her master's look, wiped and dusted with new ardor; but this time the voice of the barber made itself heard, and it was she whom he addressed.

"Marguerite, I said to you when you came into my house that I detested curious, indiscreet people, — servants who spy on their master. Do you remember it?"

"Yes, yes, monsieur," said the old servant, continuing to rub the top of the table.

"How do you know, then, whether I sleep late, whether I keep the light burning a long time, whether I am awake at night? — you who should be in your room at nine o'clock every evening and go to bed immediately."

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"Monsieur, I beg your pardon; but at times, when the wind blows or the thunder growls, it's impossible for me to sleep; then, monsieur, I get up to pray to my patron saint, or cross my shovel and tongs, or to place a branch of boxwood on my bed. You know boxwood conjures the storm; and if they had taken some of it formerly to the Arsenal, on the Billi Tower, it would not have been entirely destroyed by lightning in the year 1537 or '38 — I don't know which exactly."

"Hang it! leave your boxwood and the Billi Tower alone; answer the question I asked you."

"That's what I'm doing, monsieur; it's always the wind or the storm which makes me wakeful, and as my window faces yours (when I say faces, it's a story above), then I see your light sometimes, and it seems to me that monsieur is walking about in his room. I'm not very certain of it, for there are curtains, and the shade deceives one sometimes."

"As I wish to prevent you from having the trouble of making sure that I am asleep, this evening you will change your room, and you will sleep in that which is above my apartments."

"What, monsieur! in that room where nobody ever goes? I do not believe that it has been inhabited since I came here, and I fear —"

"That's enough; see that you obey; and take care not to spy again on my actions, or I shall be forced to send you away from the house."

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"Mercy! how ashamed I am at having made you scold Marguerite!" said Blanche, again approaching the barber. "If she said that, my friend, it was because of the interest she takes in your health. You know well that she is very much attached to you; but since it makes you angry, I promise you it shall not occur again. Come, that's the last of it; you won't say any more to her about it — will you?"

Blanche's voice was so sweet, so touching, that Touquet lost his air of severity and very nearly smiled as he answered, —

"Yes, that's the last of it; let us there leave it. As to you, Blanche, continue to be good, docile."

"And you will let me go out a little — will you not? You will allow me to go to walk in the Pré-aux-Clercs or on the Place Royale?"

"We shall see; we shall see a little later. To amuse yourself, vary your employments."

"That's what I do, my dear; I often leave my needle to spin some thread; or, better still, I take my tapestry work. Oh, you shall see; I'm making something very pretty."

"I know your talent — your taste. You have a sitar; you can amuse yourself by playing on it. Chaudoreille has given you some lessons."

"Yes; now I can play as well as he can, for I believe he's not very practised on it, although he says he's a great musician. But all that hardly ever amuses me; I should like much better to sit at

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the window which looks on the street, but you won't let me open it."

"No, Blanche; too many people are passing in this neighborhood; you would be seen, ogled, insulted, by the bachelors, the pages, who take pleasure in annoying people."

"Well, I won't open my window. However, if you were willing I could put a mask on my face; then they could not see me."

"They would notice you none the less; besides, Blanche, only the court ladies are permitted to wear masks. I repeat to you, avoid the glances of these impertinent louts who run the streets, ogling at all the windows. You are not yet sixteen years old. In some years I shall leave Paris; I shall sell this house, and I shall retire into the country; there you can enjoy more liberty, and there you will taste pleasures which are worth more than any this city could offer you.—But someone is coming into the shop; go, Blanche, upstairs to your room."

The young girl kissed the barber and quickly regained the passage, from which a staircase led to her chamber. She sighed lightly as she entered it, and said to herself, while glancing around her,—

"Always here! Always to see the same things! No one to speak to except Marguerite! She is very good, she loves me very much; but sometimes her stories are very wearisome to me. Well, then, if I must—" and Blanche took up a piece

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of tapestry which she was making and sang, while working, one of the three airs which her music master had taught her. Soon the door of the room opened; Marguerite had followed the young girl, but did not arrive as soon as she, because her legs had not the vivacity of sixteen years. The old nurse pouted, for Blanche was the cause of her having to change her room, which was no small matter to Marguerite. Blanche perceived it; she ran in front of the old woman, made her sit down, and took her hands, while saying to her with a calming smile, —

"Are you vexed with me, nurse? You must have seen that I said all that without thinking that there was anything wrong in it."

Who could resist Blanche's smile? The old woman was much more sensitive to such sweet manners because people rarely used them with her; and that is why sometimes an old man loses his reason when a pretty girl casts a tender glance at him, because for a long time he has not been in the habit of receiving such glances.

"Who could remain angry with you?" said Marguerite, pressing Blanche's hand; "but for all that, it's very disagreeable to change rooms — to move at my age."

"I will help you, dear nurse; I will carry everything."

"Oh, it's not that; it's on the same landing; it's not far to carry things. But the room I've

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lived in for eight years, ever since I came here, was, thanks to my prayers and precautions, protected from the visits of all evil spirits. There I could defy all attempts of sorcerers and magicians; and all that I did there I shall have to do over again in the new room where I am to sleep."

"Do you believe, then, Marguerite, that sorcerers will come to visit you if you don't take all your precautions?"

"And why not, mademoiselle? Don't those people get in wherever they can penetrate? There are a great number of them in Paris. They carry away the corpses off the gibbets of Montfaucon; they commit a thousand horrors to make their sorceries successful. It is now nearly fifty years ago (it was my mother who told me that story) that a lackey, ruined by play, sold himself to the devil for ten crowns. The demon transformed himself into a serpent and took possession of the lackey, introducing himself into the latter's body by the mouth; and from that time on the unlucky man made horrible grimaces, because the devil was in his body. Some years later a watchman was carried off by a sorcerer."

"Ah, dear nurse, you are going to tell me some more of those stories which will make me timorous at night."

"I don't tell you these to make you tremble, but to prove to you that it's necessary to be on one's guard against magicians, and not to be like

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those incredulous people who doubt everything when we have so many examples of the power of magic. I'll not do more than cite to you the Maréchale d'Ancre and Urbain Grandier, who lodged some devils in the bodies of some pious Ursulines at Loudun; that is too frightful. But I will only tell you what happened to a magician called César Perditor; that dates seventeen years back, or thereabouts. You see, my dear child, that's not very ancient."

"But, dear nurse, aren't you going to begin your moving?" said Blanche, who did not seem very eager to hear Marguerite's story.

"We've plenty of time," answered the old servant as she drew her chair close to Blanche's, delighted to relate a story about sorcerers, although that would make her tremble also. Marguerite commenced immediately:—

"This César was, said they, very well versed in his magic art, and produced at his will both hail and thunder. He had a familiar spirit, and a dog that carried his letters and brought back the answers to him. At a quarter of a league distant from this city, on the Gentilly side, he lived in a cave, in which he caused the devil and all his infernal court to appear. Ah, my poor child; they say that at a great distance from the cave a frightful noise might be heard every night. He made love philters, and wax images, by means of which he caused the persons they represented to languish and die.

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"One day — no, it must have been one night — an old man came to the cave, who appeared to be suffering and in great distress. A great lord, a libertine, a worthless fellow, had stolen away his daughter, his only child; the old man in his despair, unable to obtain justice, went to the magician to procure the means of revenging himself upon the man who had outraged him."

"Nurse, it seems to me your master is calling you," said Blanche, interrupting Marguerite.

"No, no; he did not call me. Except at meal times, what need has M. Touquet of me? But as we were saying, the old man went to seek a magician, and the latter promised him help; in fact, they heard more noise than usual in the cave that night, — so much that the lieutenant of police sent some people there, and César was taken and led to the Bastile, where soon after the devil strangled him."

"And the old man, nurse?"

"He never returned to his dwelling; without doubt the devil carried him away also, or else the great nobleman, having learned that he had gone to the magician's house. But nobody knows anything further about it. Still, that will prove to you, my dear, how dangerous it is to have anything to do with those people."

"Dear nurse, this little talisman which you gave me, that I wear, — is not that the work of a sorcerer?"

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"Certainly not, darling; on the contrary, it is to preserve you from their snares that I gave it to you. It is under the protection of my patron saint; with that, my dear Blanche, you could go about, run anywhere; your innocence would not be in the slightest danger."

"Why, then, does my good friend never permit me to leave my room?"

"Ah, my dear Blanche, it is because M. Touquet does not believe in talismans; and it is very unfortunate for him."

"But you, Marguerite, who are afraid of everything, — why don't you carry a similar talisman?"

"Ah, my child, the quality of yours consists principally in preserving your virtue, and at my age one has no need of a talisman to preserve that."

"My virtue! Do magicians take virtue from young girls?"

"Not only magicians, but fascinating gallants, — finally, all the worthless fellows of whom M. Touquet was talking to you this morning."

"And what would these people do with my virtue?"

"My dear child, that is to say, they would seek to turn your head, to give you a taste for coquetry, dissipation, baubles, vanity and deceit; then you would be no longer my good, sweet Blanche."

"Ah, I understand; but, dear nurse, without a talisman I fully believe that I should never have

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those tastes. I would do nothing that should cause trouble to those who had taken care of me from my infancy, who have done so much for me since I lost my father."

"That's all very well, my child, but with a talisman you see I am much easier; and if M. Touquet believed about it as I do, he would give you a little more liberty. Not that I blame him for fearing for you the attempts of worthless fellows; you are growing every day so pretty."

"Dear nurse, do worthless fellows trouble pretty girls, then?"

"Alas, yes, my dearie. I have seen them often do so; and, unfortunately, the pretty girls listen willingly to the good-for-nothing fellows."

"They listen willingly to them, nurse? Is it because they speak better than other men?"

"No, not better, but they know so well how to dissemble; their speech is golden, their eyes deceptive, their manners — Ah, how glad I am that you have a talisman!"

"But, nurse, since I do not leave my room —"

"That's true, my dear; but you will not always keep your room, and under my watchful care it seems to me that one could very well allow you to take a little walk from time to time. M. Touquet is severe — very severe — to make me change my lodging because I noticed that he did not sleep at night. Is it my fault — mine — that he does not sleep?"

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"He prevents me from opening my window."

"Ah, that is because it opens on the street; and if he knew you looked so often through the lattice — But no one can possibly see you; the panes are so small, so close together."

"Oh, yes; it is like a grating."

"A father could not be more strict."

"Ah, Marguerite, he stands to me in the place of mine."

"Yes, yes; I know it well; however, he is no relation — is he?"

"No, Marguerite; I believe not."

"According to what I heard in the neighborhood, before I came into his service, you are the daughter of a poor gentleman who came to Paris to follow a lawsuit about ten years ago."

"Yes, dear nurse; I was then five years and some months of age. It seems to me, however, that I still remember my father; he was very good, and he often kissed me."

"And your mother, — do you remember her?"

"Alas, no; but I believe I can still remember the time when my father and I arrived here; we had been a long time in a carriage, and came from far off."

"And M. Touquet lodged you, for then he kept lodgings; and after that?"

"I was very tired; they gave me something to eat and put me to bed in this room, and I have always occupied it since."

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"And after that?"

"I did not see my father again. The next day M. Touquet told me he was dead."

"Yes; it was very unfortunate, they say. There were then, as there are very often still, fights in the night between pages and lackeys and honest men, who were often attacked by these cursed scoundrels while entering their own houses. That night they committed a thousand disorders in the streets of Paris; several persons were assassinated; and your poor father, who had gone out, was, while returning, drawn into a brawl, and perished trying to defend himself. That is all that I have learned; do you know anything further?"

"No, Marguerite; besides, you know very well that my protector does not wish me to talk about that."

"Yes, because he fears that it will give you pain."

"He has deigned to keep me near him, to educate me as his daughter and give me some accomplishments; and I have for him the most lively gratitude."

"Oh, yes; he has done very well by you. He loves you, although he is not caressing, nor does he say much; and I am very sure that he has the greatest interest in you. It seems that he does not intend himself to marry, although he is still young. He is in easy circumstances, — more so than he wishes it to appear."

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"Do you believe that, Marguerite?"

"Ah, hush! If he knew that I had said that, and that I had sometimes seen him counting gold, he would send me away for it."

"You have seen him counting gold?"

"I did not say that to you, mademoiselle. No, no; I have seen nothing. Ah, mon Dieu! what a gossip I am! I had much better go and attend to my moving."

"I will go with you, dear nurse."

"Come then, if you like, Blanche."

Blanche followed Marguerite as she went up, and hastened to carry the furniture and clothing of the old servant to the opposite room. In vain Marguerite cried to her, —

"Slowly, mademoiselle; don't carry anything until I have sprinkled it with holy water."

Blanche, to spare Marguerite fatigue, had very soon finished the moving.

"You will be better here," said Blanche; "this room is more convenient, larger."

"I shall find it pretty sad," said Marguerite, casting fearful glances around her. "That large alcove, those dark hangings, those recesses — Oh, mademoiselle, do see, if you please, if there is anything in that big closet."

Blanche ran to open the closet, and, after having looked through it, brought to Marguerite a little book, thick with dust.

"That's all I've found, dear nurse," said she,

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presenting the book to the old woman, who put on her spectacles and said, —

"Let's see a bit what it is."

Marguerite succeeded, with no little trouble, in reading, "Conjuring-book of the Sorcerer Odoard, the Famous Tier of Tags."

"Ah, mon Dieu!" said Marguerite, letting the book fall; "I am lost if that sorcerer has slept in this room. Miséricorde! a tier of — "

"What does that mean, — a tier of tags?"

"That is to say — that is to say, mademoiselle, a very wicked man, who doesn't love his kind; a man who casts spells to make folks unlucky."

"Are there any of those sorcerers now?"

"Alas, yes, my dear child; they are always casting spells, for I have met during my life several persons who have been bewitched by them. Let us burn that; let's burn that quick."

Marguerite hurried to throw the book of sorceries on to the hearth, where she lit a fire; then she began to pray to her patron saint, and Blanche went down to her work.

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CHAPTER IV

The Chevalier Chaudoreille

Blanche and Marguerite had no sooner taken their departure from the back room and returned to their customary avocations, than Touquet hastened to meet a man who had come into the shop, saying to him, in a friendly tone,—

"Come in, come in, my dear Chaudoreille, you've made me wait a deuce of a time and today I have something really important to say to you."

The personage who had just come into Maître Touquet's house was a man of a very striking and peculiar appearance, about thirty-five years of age, though he appeared at least forty-five, so worn was his face and so hollow his cheeks. His yellow skin was only relieved by two little scarlet spots formed on the prominence of his cheek bones, which by their brightness and their gloss betrayed their origin. His eyes were small but bright; and M. Chaudoreille rolled them continually, never, by any chance, fixing them on the person to whom he was speaking. His short snub nose contrasted with his large mouth, which was surmounted by an immense red mustache, the color

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of his hair; while beneath his lower lip a tuft of beard terminated in a point on his chin.

The height of the chevalier was barely five feet, and the leanness of his body was accentuated by the threadbare close jacket which enveloped it; the buttons of his doublet were missing in many places, and some ill-executed darns seemed ready to gape into holes; his breeches, being much too large, made his thighs appear of enormous size, and made the legs which issued from them appear still more lanky, for his boots, with flaring tops which drooped to his ankles, could not hide the absence of calves. These boots, of a dark yellow, had heels two inches high, and were habitually adorned with spurs; the doublet and smallclothes were of a faded rose color, and accompanied by a little cloak of the same tint, which barely covered his figure; in addition to these, he wore a very high ruff, a small hat surmounted by an old red plume, worn slanted over one eye, an old belt of green silk, a sword which was very much longer than anyone else carried, and of which the handle came up to his breast. The above is a very faithful portrait of the one who called himself the Chevalier de Chaudoreille, if we add that his slight Gascon accent denoted his origin; that he marched with his head high, his nose in the air, his hand on his hip, his legs stiff, as though ready to put himself on his guard; and that he appeared disposed to defy all passers-by.

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On entering the shop Chaudoreille threw himself on a bench, like one overcome by fatigue, and placed his hat near him, crying, —

"Let us rest. By George! I well deserve to. Oh! what a night! Good God! what a night!"

"And what the devil did you do last night to make you so tired?"

"Oh, nothing more than usual for me, it's true: flogged three or four big rascals who wished to stop the chair of a countess, wounded two pages who were insulting a young girl, gave a big stroke with my sword to a student who was going to introduce himself into a house by the window, delivered over to the watch four robbers who were about to plunder a poor gentleman. That's nearly all that I did last night."

"Hang it!" said Touquet, smiling ironically, "do you know, Chaudoreille, that you yourself are worth three patrols of the watch? It seems to me that the King or Monsieur le Cardinal should recompense such fine conduct and nominate you to some important place in the police of this city, in place of leaving a man so brave, so useful, to ramble about the streets all day, and haunt the gambling-hells in order to try to borrow a crown."

"Yes," said Chaudoreille, without appearing to notice the latter part of the barber's phrase, "I know that I am very brave, and that my sword has often been very useful to the State — that is to say, to the oppressed. I work without pay;

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I yield to every movement of my heart; it's in the blood. Zounds! honor before everything; and in this century we do not jest. I am what somebody at court calls a 'rake of honor': an offensive twinkle of the eye, a rather cold bow, a cloak which rubs against mine, presto! my sword is in my hand; I am conscious of nothing but that; I would fight with a child of five years if he treated me with disrespect."

"I know that we live in the age when one fights for a mere trifle, but I never heard it said that your duels had caused much stir."

"What the devil, my dear Touquet! the dead cannot speak; and those who have an affair with me never return. You have heard tell of the famous Balagni, nicknamed the 'Brave,' who was killed in a duel about fifteen years ago. Well, my friend, I am his pupil and his successor."

"It's unfortunate for you that you didn't come into the world two centuries earlier; tourneys are beginning to be out of fashion, and chevaliers who right all wrongs, giant killers, one no longer sees except on the stage at plays."

"It's very certain that if I had lived in the time of the Crusades I should have brought from Palestine a thousand Saracens' ears, but my dear Rolande was there. This redoubtable sword, which came to me from a distant cousin, was the one carried by Rolande the Furious; it has sent a devil of a lot of men into the other world."

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"I'm always afraid that you will fall over it; it seems to me too big for you."

"It has, however, been curtailed an inch since I have had it, and that by reason of its having been used so much. I fear that if I should continue in the same style, it will become a little dagger."

"Stop talking about your prowess, Chaudoreille; I have to speak to you of matters more interesting than that."

"If you will shave me first; I have great need of it. My beard grows twice as quickly at night when I do not sup in the evening."

"It looks as if you had dieted for some days, then."

While the barber prepared everything that was necessary for shaving Chaudoreille, the latter detached his sword. After having looked all over the shop in search of a place in which it seemed convenient to put it, he decided to keep it on his knees; he relieved himself of his cloak, then he took off the faded ruff which surrounded his neck, and abandoned his odd, lean little figure to the cares of Touquet, who came forward bearing a basin and a soapball. The barber began by taking and throwing into a corner of the shop the sword which Chaudoreille was holding on his knees. The chevalier made a movement of despair, crying,—

"What are you doing, unhappy man? You will break Rolande, the sword which Charlemagne's nephew carried."

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"If it's such a good blade it won't break. How do you think I can shave you holding that great halberd on your knee?"

"It's necessary to handle it with care at least. Zounds! you are nearly as quick as I am."

"Do you want me to cut your mustaches?"

"No, no, — never. A chevalier without mustaches! What are you thinking of? Do you want people to take me for a young girl?"'

"I don't think anyone could so deceive himself."

"That's all right; I especially pride myself on my mustaches, and the imperial that gives a masculine air. Ah, King Francis the First knew very well what he was doing when he wore that little pointed beard on his chin. Don't you think that I bear some resemblance to that monarch?"

"You resemble him so much, in fact, that I defy anyone, no matter who it might be, to perceive it. But let's get to my business: I wish to employ you. Your time is free?"

"Free? Yes; that is to say, for you there is nothing that I won't leave. I've only two or three amorous appointments and five or six affairs of honor; but those can be put off."

"There's some money to be earned."

"I'm a man who would put myself in the fire to make myself useful."

"The business is not positively my own."

"Yes, I understand, — a delicate mission. You

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know that I've already served you in many such cases."

"I hope that you'll be more adroit this time; for the manner in which you conducted yourself in the last matters in which I employed you should have prevented me from asking you to serve me again."

"Oh, my dear Touquet, don't be unjust; it seems to me that I managed them passably well. First, you desired me to carry a letter to a young lady without letting her parents know of it."

"Yes; and you positively gave the note to her mother."

"What the devil! how should I know it was her mother? That woman had rouge, flowers, laces, a corset which made her waist about as thick as my purse; I believed her to be the young lady. With their hoops, basquines and immense head-dresses, it will soon be impossible to distinguish the sexes."

"Another time I told you to feign a quarrel with one of your friends, so as to draw a crowd together in the street in order to stop the chair of a young woman to whom someone wished to speak; but after two or three blows had passed you ran away."

"Ah, my friend, but that does not detract from my bravery. I knew that the quarrel was only pretended; despite that, at the third blow I felt the blood mount to my face, and I ran away for fear of getting angry."

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"This time I hope you will conduct yourself better."

"Speak, if you have need of my valor."

"No, thank God, I shan't have to put your valor to the proof; the matter is very simple and will not cost you a great effort of genius."

"So much the worse; I swear by Rolande that I feel disposed to brave every terror. — Take care, my friend; your razor almost touched my nose; you will end by taking off a piece, and that would destroy the charm of my physiognomy."

"Fear nothing, most valorous Chaudoreille; I will respect your face; it would be a pity to spoil it."

"Yes, most assuredly; it would cause tears to more than one great lady who deigns to look with favor upon your humble servant."

"Those great ladies would do well if they gave you another doublet, for yours has well earned its retirement."

"My dear fellow, love doesn't pause for such trifles; I please with or without a doublet; the figure is everything, and I'm more than a match for many a chevalier covered with tinsel and gewgaws; besides, if I wished to have some lace or cuffs or trinkets, I should not have to give more than a smile for them. Ah, by Jove! — Take care there, my brave Touquet. See! your neighbor's dog is going to take my ruff. Ah, the rogue! he's holding it in his chops."

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"You must take it away from him."

"That's very easy for you to say. That cursed dog bites everybody."

Chaudoreille got up, half shaved, and ran and took his sword, which he drew from the scabbard; but during this time the dog had left the shop, carrying off the ruff, and the boastful chevalier pursued him into the street, crying, —

"My ruff! Zounds, my ruff! Stop thief!"

The shouts of Chaudoreille made the dog run more quickly, and the passers-by looked on with astonishment at the half-dressed man, with one cheek shaven and the other covered with soap, who ran, sword in hand, crying, "Stop thief!" The idlers gathered—for there were idlers as early as 1632—and followed Chaudoreille, that they might see the end of the adventure. The children stoned the dog, which redoubled its speed, passed through an alleyway and disappeared from Chaudoreille's sight. The latter, who could do no more, stopped at length, heaving a big sigh. His anger was redoubled when he saw everybody looking and laughing at him; he swore then, but so low that nobody could hear him; and, making the best of his way through the crowd which surrounded him, he sadly regained the barber's house.

"You must be a fool, to run through the street like that," said Touquet, who had grown impatient during Chaudoreille's race; "you deserve that I shouldn't finish shaving you."

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"Oh, zounds! that is very easy for you to say; I have been robbed — a magnificent ruff."

"You can put on another."

"I haven't another."

"With a smile you could have as many as you wish."

"Yes, yes; but I'm not by way of smiling just now."

"Come, calm yourself. If our affair is successful, as I've no doubt it will be, I'll give you some crowns with which you can buy other collars; for ruffs are no longer in fashion."

This assurance alleviated somewhat Chaudoreille's grief, and he reseated himself, that the barber might finish shaving him.

"You will go today into the city," resumed the barber, while finishing the chevalier's toilet, — "into the Rue de la Calandre; you will go into a perfumer's shop which is about half-way down the street."

"Yes, yes, I know; that is where I supply myself."

"Better and better! It will be easier for you to obtain an entrance. You should know, then, the young girl whom I will describe to you: twenty years old, of medium height, unrestrained figure, brown hair and intelligent black eyes."

"Listen; I don't believe that I know her, seeing that it's two or three years since I bought any perfumery, because scents make me nervous."

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"If you could dispense with lying to me, Chaudoreille, at every turn, you would give me great pleasure."

"What do I understand by that? I lie? By jingo! I swear to you, by Rolande —"

"Hold your tongue and listen. A great nobleman is in love with the young girl whose portrait I have just given you. This great nobleman is the Marquis de Villebelle."

"By Jove! What, the Marquis de Villebelle! He's a jolly fellow, who makes everybody talk about him. I'm delighted to work for a man of that stamp; he's as brave as he is generous. That's a profligate after my own heart. I shall be glad to give him proofs of my zeal and my genius."

"You'll have to begin by holding your tongue; remember, the least indiscretion will cost you dear. I should not have told you the name of the one who is concerned in this matter if the young girl had not known; but as she might herself tell you, it is better that you should learn it from me. Remember, you are still in my employ, and not in that of the marquis. I could myself have discharged the commission which he gave me, but I am beginning to have a reputation for probity and wisdom; it is generally thought that, turning from the errors of my youth, I no longer mix in intrigues, and I don't wish to disturb the good opinion they now have of me in this neighborhood."

"Ah, rascal, you're as mischievous as a mon-

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key; you think of nothing but increasing your business, and your cold, severe air deceives some people. You're right, by jingo! One must dissemble; it's the essence of intrigue, and I shall try to throw off the appearance of being a libertine and a profligate in order that I may be more successful in wheedling the little innocent."

The barber shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and again approached the blade of his razor to Chaudoreille's nose. The latter's face became still paler, except the spots on his cheeks, where the color seemed immovable.

"Curse it!" cried Touquet, while holding the end of Chaudoreille's nose between his fingers, to prevent him from moving, while he plied the razor; "can't you ever keep still and refrain from trembling beneath my razor blade? You deserve to be slashed all over your face. — Come, get up; it's finished."

"Many thanks," said Chaudoreille, breathing more freely; "I am shaved like a cherubim. Oh, you have a hand as dexterous as it's nimble. That makes seventy-seven shaves that I owe you for."

"That's all right; we'll reckon that later."

"I know that you'll recall it to me; you're not like the barber who shaved one of my friends on credit, and who made a notch in him every time, to mark the shave, he said."

"Before the people come in, let us agree on what we have to do."

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"Speak on; I am listening while I am washing myself."

"You will go, then, to the perfumer's shop, and while buying something—"

"Oh, yes; a collar or a ruff."

"No matter,—no matter what."

"I find that ruffs suit me better."

"Hold your tongue, cursed chatterer; there's nobody here to notice your face. You will enter into conversation with the young girl I have depicted; you will say to her that M. le Marquis is in love with her to the point of distraction."

"Yes; I shall say to her that he will stab himself before her eyes if she won't meet him."

"It's not a question of killing himself, idiot. That's a fine way to seduce a grisette!"

"I never seduced them any other way."

"Talk about presents, jewelry; they respond to that much quicker."

"Each one to his own method; as for me, I never make love that way; for the rest, I'll say everything that you wish; I'll make the marquis as generous and magnificent as a native of Gascony."

"Finally, you will demand a rendezvous, in the name of the marquis, for tomorrow evening."

"Where shall it be?"

"Wherever you like, but preferentially in an unfrequented quarter."

"Very well; and after?"

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"Oh, the rest is my affair."

"A moment: if the little one doesn't grant an interview?"

"What are you thinking of? A shop girl who knows that she is pleasing to the noble Seigneur de Villebelle — I am certain that she's on tenterhooks already because no messenger has reached her. You must beware of committing any blunder which will render you unsuccessful."

"Be easy; I'm not a clown, I flatter myself, and I wish by this affair to put myself in the good graces of the marquis."

"Yet again, it is not for him, but for me, that you are doing the business; if you should allow a single word of this adventure to escape in the town, if you should have the misfortune to mention the marquis, remember that then the blade of my razor won't leave that face whole about which you seem to make such a fuss."

The barber's eyes evinced his firm determination of keeping his promise; Chaudoreille hastened to get his sword and attach it to his side while murmuring, —

"Yes, undoubtedly I make much of my face; it is very worthy of the trouble, and has given me many happy moments. This devil of a Touquet is always joking, but between friends one should not get angry. We are both aware of our mutual bravery, and it's superfluous for us to give proofs of it. I swear to you by Rolande that I will use

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the greatest discretion, that I may be relied on. Our acquaintance doesn't date from today; for nearly fifteen years we have been united in friendship. We are two jolly fellows who have played our pranks. How many intrigues have we conducted by our skill, without counting our personal prowess! You, built like a Hercules, an antique figure, noble carriage, — you would have adored big women — that is to say, tall women; I, smaller but well made, with a more modern physiognomy, — I prefer them more graceful and slender. But love never troubled you much; you prefer money. Ah, money and play, — those have been your pleasures. As for me, I'm fond of gaming also; I play a very strong game of piquet. But gallantry employs a great part of my time. I can't help it; I love the women. But that's not astonishing; I am their spoilt child; they have strewn the path of my life with flowers, without counting all those that still remain for me to cull. I dedicated to them my heart and my sword. But love and valor do not always lead to fortune; you have gathered wealth quicker than I, and I compliment you upon it. While I have been following after some Venus, you have conducted without my aid some intricate intrigues; for this house did not belong to you formerly, and now you are the proprietor of it; it did not fall to you from the clouds."

"What are you meddling with?" said the bar-

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ber angrily. "What does it matter to you how I acquired this house? When I've employed you haven't I paid you, and often a good deal better than you deserve? I've already told you, Chaudoreille, that if you wish that we remain friends, and if you desire through me to earn money from time to time, you had better not begin your foolish questions, nor seek to learn that which I do not judge fit to confide to you; otherwise I shall show you my door and you will never enter it again."

"Oh, not so fast. By jingo! he's a little Vesuvius,—this dear Touquet. If I gave way to my natural temper we should see some fine things; however, that's ended; silence on that subject. Now I am dressed; I lack nothing but my ruff; how can I go out without that?"

"You went out very well a minute ago, half dressed."

"But a minute ago I was sword in hand, and in those moments I see nothing but my victim. It's all right; I will pull my cloak up a little higher. Ah, I was forgetting an essential. That I may buy something in the little one's shop it's necessary that I should have some money, and my pockets are empty this morning."

"Wait; take these ten crowns, on account of what I shall give you if you fulfil my instructions correctly."

"That's well understood," said Chaudoreille,

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taking the money and drawing from his belt an old silk purse, which had formerly been red, in which he placed, one by one, with an air of respect, the ten pieces which the barber had given him.

"It's still too early," said Touquet, "for you to go to the perfumer's; those dames do not open their shops as early as we do ours; while waiting till the time comes for you to execute your commission couldn't you go up and see Blanche, and give her a music lesson? That will amuse her, and I notice that she does not find much to distract her in her room, where she sees no one but Marguerite."

At the name of Blanche, Chaudoreille raised his eyes to Heaven, and heaved a sigh which he stifled immediately, crying, —

"By the way, how is she, the pretty child? I was going to ask you about her, for it is a century since I have seen her."

"She's very well, but she's tired of being in the house and wishes to go out."

"What the devil! why don't you send me more often to keep her company? I can amuse her, my beautiful Blanche, and I can play something for her."

"I'm not sure that you can amuse her much. Blanche said to me that you always sang the same things, and that she now knew as much as you do of the sitar."

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"These young girls are full of conceit. I confess that she's made rapid progress, and that is not astonishing; I have a way of teaching which would make a donkey capable of singing songs; besides, the little one is intelligent, but I flatter myself that I can still teach her something more."

"Chaudoreille, I have given you a great proof of my confidence in permitting you to see Blanche; you must swear to me that you will never speak of her beauty."

"Be easy; when by chance anyone asks me if I know the young girl who is under your care, I answer—since we are on the subject—that I have seen her three or four times, and that she is neither one thing nor the other,—one of those faces which people say nothing about."

"That's well; if anyone imagined that this house held one of the prettiest women in Paris, I should nevermore have a moment's peace; I should be incessantly tormented by a crowd of gallants, of profligates, of libertines; I should see this house become the rendezvous of all the worthless fellows of the neighborhood. I couldn't go away for a moment without one of them trying to introduce himself to Blanche, and Marguerite's watchfulness would be as insufficient as my own to frustrate all the enterprises of these gallants. It is to avoid all this annoyance that I withdraw Blanche from the notice of curious people."

"Oh, as far as that goes, you do very well;

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I quite approve your conduct; you must not let them see her, nor allow her to go out for a moment. If you wish, I can say everywhere that she's horrible, — blind of one eye, lame, and hump-backed."

"No, no; one must never overdo one's precautions and fall into a contrary excess."

"It would be so sorrowful if some miserable adventurer should carry this beautiful flower away from us."

"How? carry her away from us?"

"I should say carry her away from you; it is only by favor that I see her. She is, in truth, a jewel; she has the candor, the innocence of childhood. Ah, zounds! how happy you are, Touquet, for you are guarding this treasure for yourself, I'll wager."

"For myself?" said the barber, knitting his brows; then he was silent for a moment, while Chaudoreille, placed before a little mirror, occupied himself in studying some smiles and glances of the eye. "I have already told you that I do not like questions," responded Touquet at last; "but I see that you will be incorrigible until your shoulders have felt the weight of my arm."

"Always joking. You are really a most ironical man."

"Come, go up to Blanche's room; you can stay three-quarters of an hour. You must leave by the passageway; I don't wish the people who will be

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here to see you come from the interior of the house. You will go where I told you, and you will come and give me an account of the result of your enterprise."

"At your dinner hour?"

"No, this evening, at dusk."

"As you please, as you will. Ah, mon Dieu! I am thinking how I can go up to my young pupil without a ruff."

"Will that prevent you from singing?"

"No, but decency — this naked neck. Lend me a collar, — anything."

"Hang it! is it necessary to make so much fuss? Do you think that Blanche will pay much attention to your face?"

"My face! my face! It would seem, to hear you, that I am an Albino."

"Here's somebody coming; get out."

The barber pushed Chaudoreille into the passage, where the latter remained for a quarter of an hour, seeking by what manner he could hold his cloak, and deciding at last to go up to his pupil.

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CHAPTER V

The Music Lesson

Blanche was seated at work near her window, the small, dim panes of which scarcely permitted her to distinguish anything in the street.

However, from time to time she glanced downward in that direction to distract her thoughts; not that she was at all sad, or that she had anything to trouble her, but a young girl who is nearly sixteen years of age experiences in the depths of her innocent heart certain void, vague desires which she cannot easily account for. She sighs, she becomes dreamy; a mere nothing renders her uneasy; the least noise, the sound of an unknown voice, makes her heart beat more quickly; she looks oftener in the mirror; she pays more attention to her toilet, though, as yet, there is nobody in particular whom she wishes to charm. But a secret instinct implants in her the desire to please, a sure symptom that she begins to feel the need of loving; and, for that reason, she falls into reveries and sighs without knowing why — so it was, at least, in the time of which we are speaking. As to the young girls of our own time, they dream, also, but they sigh less.

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The character of the barber, the cold, serious manner which he wore before Blanche, did not invite confidence, and imposed a restraint on the young girl, whose ingenuous heart seemed to seek a friend. She respected Touquet and obeyed him; she regarded him as her benefactor, but she could not chat freely with him, for the barber's laconic answers always appeared to indicate little desire to engage in a long conversation. To make up for this, Marguerite was very chatty, and would willingly have passed the entire day in gossip; but the sole subjects of her conversation were sorcerers, magicians and robbers, and these were not at all amusing to Blanche, who preferred, to Marguerite's appalling stories, a tender love-song or a story of chivalry, the heroes of which were very strong on love; and one of that ilk had no less prowess as a paladin because he was faithful to his lady for twenty years.

Blanche was dreaming, then, when somebody rapped softly at her door; and immediately Chaudoreille's odd little head appeared between the door and the wall, and he said in mellifluous accents, —

"May one come in, interesting scholar?"

Blanche raised her eyes and burst into a fit of laughter on perceiving Chaudoreille's face, this being the effect his appearance ordinarily produced on the young girl.

"Come in, come in, my dear master," said she,

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rising to curtsey to Chaudoreille, who then introduced himself entirely into the room, bowing to Blanche three times, so low that each time his sword fell before him, and on rising he was obliged to put Rolande into his scabbard again.

"I am so much in the habit of drawing him," said Chaudoreille, "that he can't rest quietly in his sheath for two hours at a time. — Come, be quiet, Rolande; you know well, my dear companion, that the night never passes without my giving you some occupation."

"Why, Monsieur Chaudoreille, do you fight every day?"

"What else could you expect, beautiful angel? It is my element; I should not sleep if I had not drawn my sword, and I should fall ill if three days were to elapse without my ridding the earth of an impertinent fellow or a rival."

"O good Heavens!"

"But let us leave that subject and speak of you, delightful creature. You seem to me fresher and more beautiful than ever; it is the unfolding of the bud, it is the opening of the flower, it is the fruit which — By the way, how are you?"

"Very well. Did you come to give me a music lesson?"

"Yes, if you will permit me the pleasure. It is a long time since I had that happiness."

"I hope you're going to teach me something new."

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"By Jove! I'm not at the end of my tether. Besides, were new songs lacking, your beautiful eyes would inspire me to improvise a ballad in sixteen couplets."

Blanche brought her sitar and handed it to Chaudoreille, who raised his eyes to Heaven and heaved a big sigh as he took it.

"Are you going to be ill, Monsieur Chaudoreille?" questioned the young girl, astonished at this moaning.

"No, I am not ill; however, I feel rather uneasy," answered Chaudoreille, venturing to try the effect of the glances and smiles which he had studied before the glass.

"You seem to have difficulty in breathing," responded Blanche; "perhaps your supper last night did not agree with you."

"Pardon me; I swear to you it did not trouble me in the least. I have a horror of indigestion. Out upon it! I never put myself in the way of having it."

"Sing to me the air you are going to teach me; that will make you feel better."

"She is innocence itself," said Chaudoreille to himself while tuning the sitar; "she doesn't understand what makes me sigh. Despite that, however, I can see that she's glad to see me. Patience; before long her heart will awaken, and I shall be its conqueror."

Blanche took up her work again; Chaudoreille

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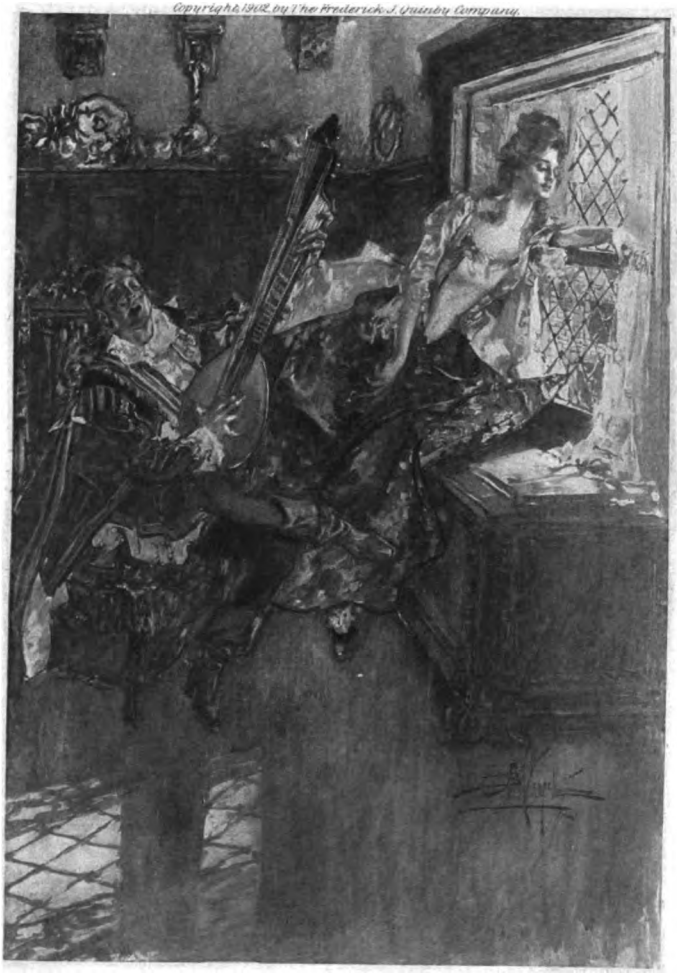

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seated himself near her, and after a quarter of an hour's tuning of the sitar, coughed, expectorated, blew his nose, turned around on his chair, arranged his cape, pursed his mouth, passed his tongue over his lips, and at last commenced in a shrill voice, which pierced the ears, an ancient ditty which Blanche had heard a hundred times before.

"I know that, my dear master," said she, interrupting Chaudoreille in the middle of a point d'orgue, which he seemed willing to prolong indefinitely; "that's one of the three you have already taught me."

"Do you think so?"

"Wait; I'll sing it for you."

Blanche took the instrument, and, gracefully accompanying herself, sang, in a melodious voice which gave a charm to the old ballad.

"That's very well, indeed," said Chaudoreille; "you sing the passages precisely in my manner; I seem to hear myself."

"Teach me another, then," said the young girl, returning the instrument to him; and Chaudoreille intoned a virelay on the great feats of Pepin the Short.

"I know that, too," said Blanche, stopping him.

"In that case I will sing you a charming villanelle."

"Mercy! that will be the third of those you have taught me. Don't you know any others?"

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"Well, I'll listen," said Blanche.

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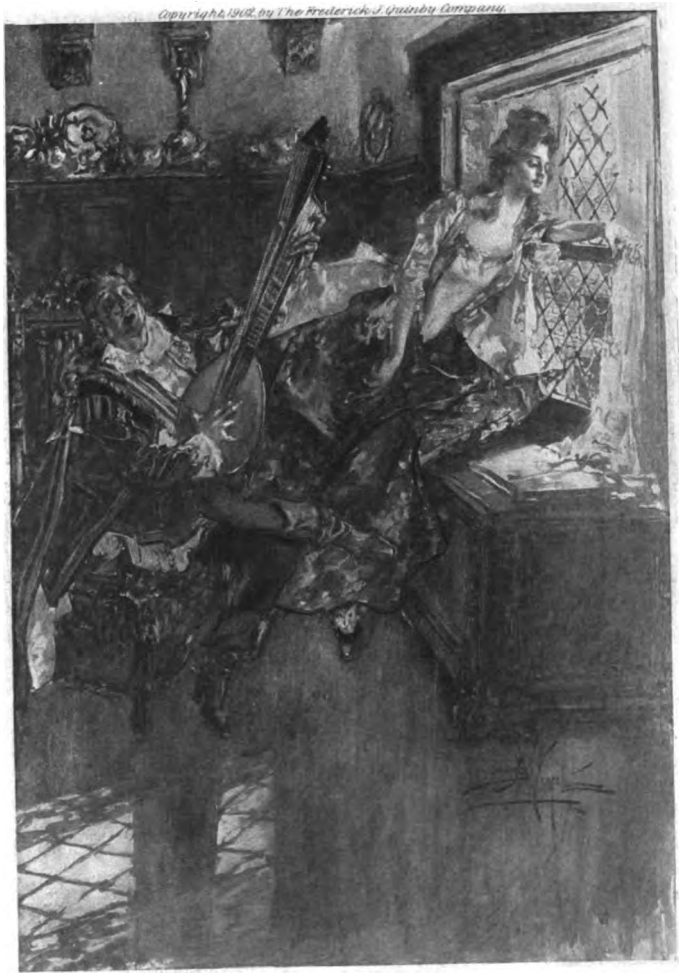

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"Pardon me, but as a cursed dog ran off with my ruff while I was being shaved, I cannot venture a new song while my throat is naked; it would embarrass the middle notes. Nevertheless, the villanelle is always a novelty, since I ever sing it with variations."

"Well, I'll listen," said Blanche, glancing towards the street. Chaudoreille heaved another sigh, and when he had taken a position which seemed to him more favorable for displaying his graces, he commenced the villanelle, which he sang to Blanche every time that he gave her a lesson: —

I have lost my turtle-dove,
  And her flight I must pursue, —
Is she not the one I love?

You regret your own fond dove,
  As the loss of mine I rue;
I have lost my turtle-dove.

At this moment some perambulating singers came into the street. They stationed themselves in front of the barber's house and, accompanying themselves on their mandolins, sang some Italian songs. Blanche listened eagerly; this music, so different from that which she heard from her master of the sitar, stirred her pulses deliciously, and approaching the window she cried, —

"Oh, how pretty that is!"

"Yes, undoubtedly it's pretty," said Chaudoreille, who believed the young girl to be speaking

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of the villanelle; "but it's necessary to acquire the same expression that I have given it. Notice it well, 'I have lost my turtle-dove,' — the accent tremulous with grief; raise the eyes to the ceiling, beat time with the left foot. 'And her flight I must pursue,' — a distracted air, and always the same accompaniment with the thumb and index finger. 'Is she not the one I love?' — a soft, flute-like sound, and make a movement of surprise while sustaining the falsetto. 'You regret your own fond dove, — ' that demands much expression. 'You regret,' — an exquisitely performed shake, — 'your own fond dove,' — inflate the sound and ascend still."

"Ah, I should be contented if I could only hear such music often," said Blanche, who had paid no attention to what Chaudoreille was saying, and had listened only to the Italians.

"I should much like to give you a lesson every day, lovely damsel; but my occupations overwhelm me — and then, Master Touquet does not often permit me the pleasure of seeing you; when far from you I sing without ceasing, —

You regret your own fond dove."

"It's a barcarolle — is it not, monsieur?"

"No, my dear girl; that's called a villanelle, the favorite song of our ancient troubadours, and of shepherds who bemoaned their shepherdesses."

"What a pity that I don't know Italian!"

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"What do you require Italian for,—in order to say,

Is she not the one I love?"

"Be quiet, be quiet; they're singing in French now," said Blanche, pressing close to the window-panes, and signing with her hand to Chaudoreille not to stir.

"What's that you're saying?" cried the sitar master, rising in surprise,—"for me to be quiet! Does that noise out there disturb you too much? To the devil with the street singers who prevent you from hearing me! I hardly know how to restrain myself from going to drive them away with a few blows from my good blade Rolande!"

"If I only dared open my window for a few moments," sighed Blanche. "But no, I must not, for M. Touquet has firmly forbidden me to do so. What a pretty, pretty air! Ah, I shall easily remember that,

I love to eternity
My darling is all to me;

that's the refrain."

"No, divine Blanche, you are mistaken; these are the words,—

I have lost my turtle-dove,
And her flight I must pursue,—
Is she not the one I love?"

The singers departed. Blanche then left the casement, and, on turning, saw Chaudoreille with

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his neck elongated, the better to execute a note. She could not restrain a desire to laugh, which was evoked by the face of the chevalier; and the latter remained with his mouth open, not knowing how to take the young girl's laughter, when Marguerite entered the room.

"It's burned at last," said the old woman as she came in.

"What is burned," cried Chaudoreille, — "the roast?"

"Ah, yes, indeed; it's a book of witchcraft, of magic. It was very hard to get it to burn, those books are so accustomed to fire."

"What is that you say, Marguerite? You have books of magic, — you who are afraid of everything? Do you wish to enter into communication with the spirits of the other world?"

"Ah, God keep me from it, Monsieur Chaudoreille. But I'll tell you how that book came into my hands, where it didn't stay long, for it seemed to me that that cursed conjuring-book burned my fingers. My master wished me to change my room —because—but I oughtn't to tell you that."

"Try to remember what you wished to tell me."

"Well, it seems I must quit the room I've occupied, to go into one in which no one has set foot during the eight years I have been in the house; and, to judge by the look of it, no one had visited it for a long time before. It's so dark, so dismal;

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the window-panes, which are two inches thick with dust, hardly allow the daylight to penetrate into the room."

"I had an idea — God forgive me — that she was going to recount to me all the spiders' webs she had found there. What do you think of it, my charming pupil?"

Blanche did not answer, for she had paid no attention to what Marguerite said; she was committing to memory the sweet refrain which had appeared so pretty to her, and was repeating in a low voice, —

"I love to eternity;"

and Chaudoreille, seeing her steeped in reverie, would not disturb her, fully persuaded that the young girl could not defend her heart against the charms of the villanelle.

"It's not a question of spiders," resumed the old servant, rather ill-humoredly; "if I had not seen that which — but at the bottom of a closet Mademoiselle Blanche found a diabolical book; it was the conjuring-book of a sorcerer named Odoard. Have you ever heard tell of a sorcerer by that name?"

"No, not that I remember. If you were to ask me about a brave man, a man of spirit, a rake of honor, most certainly I should have known him; but a sorcerer! What the devil do you think I should have to do with him? These people don't fight."

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"Monsieur Chaudoreille, — you who are so brave, — you must render me a service."

"What is it?" inquired Chaudoreille, paying more attention to Marguerite's words.

"Just now, after having burned the conjuring-book of that Odoard, surnamed the great Tier of Tags, I made another inspection of my room, sprinkling holy water everywhere, as you may well suppose."

"And what followed?"

"At the end of the alcove I perceived a little door, — one would never have supposed there was a door there; but, though old, I have good eyes, and, while pushing the bed, which made the wainscot creak, I saw the door."

"To the point, I beg of you," resumed Chaudoreille, whose eyes betrayed the uneasiness he tried in vain to dissemble.

"Well, now, I confess to you, monsieur, that I didn't dare open that door. It was no doubt the door of a closet; but that alcove is so gloomy, so dark. Finally, I'll be very much obliged if you'll come up with me and go first into whatever place we find there. I daren't ask M. Touquet, for he'd scoff at me."

"And he would be right, by jingo! Why, Marguerite, at your age, not to have more courage than that!"

"What can you expect? I'm afraid there may be a goblin in that closet, who will jump in my

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face when I open the door, which has perhaps been closed for many years; for I've never seen M. Touquet enter the room."

"Don't goblins pass through keyholes? Come, Marguerite, I blush for your cowardice."

"No one can say that sorcerers are rare in Paris. Haven't they established a Chamber at the Arsenal expressly to judge them?"

"That's true, I confess; but I don't see what makes you imagine there are any in this house?"

"Ah, Monsieur Chaudoreille, if I was to tell you all I have seen and heard — and at night the noises which —"

"What have you seen, dear nurse?" inquired Blanche, whose reverie had flown, and who had heard the last words of the old woman.

"Nothing—nothing—mademoiselle;" and the old servant added, addressing the chevalier in a low tone, "My master doesn't like me to talk of it, and he'll send me away if he learns —"

"That's enough; I don't wish to hear anything further," said Chaudoreille, rising and taking his hat. "And since Touquet has forbidden you to tell these idle stories, I beg you not to deafen my ears with them."

"But you'll come upstairs with me and look in the closet — won't you, monsieur?"

"Ah, mon Dieu! I hear ten o'clock striking; I should be in the city now; I didn't receive ten crowns for listening to your old stories; I must

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run. Au revoir, my interesting pupil. I am delighted that my last variations gave you pleasure. I hope before long to give you another lesson. With a master like me, you should be a virtuoso."

While saying these words Chaudoreille drew himself up, placed his left hand on his hip, arranged his right arm as though he were about to take his weapon; but, instead of drawing Rolande from the scabbard, he carried his hand to his hat and bowed respectfully to Blanche; then, passing quickly by Marguerite, who tried vainly to restrain him, he opened the door and went downstairs humming, —

You regret your own fond dove,
As the loss of mine I rue.

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CHAPTER VI

The Lovers. The Gossips

The barber Touquet's shop was as usual filled with a motley crowd of people of all classes. There were gathered students, shopkeepers, pages, poets, bachelors, adventurers, and even young noblemen; for the fashion of the time permitted these amiable libertines to mingle sometimes with persons in the lower classes of society, whether they sought new sensations in listening to a language which for them had all the fascinating charm of novelty, or whether it was for the purpose of playing tricks on the persons with whom they thus mixed.

Master Touquet's shop was large, and moreover furnished with benches, which latter conveniences were an almost unheard-of luxury in a time when people took their diversions standing, and when no one was seated even at the play. The barber by this means extended his custom; he attended to everything, answered everybody, and did more himself than ten hairdressers of today. His hand, which was skilful, nimble and accurate with scissors or razor, had earned him the reputation of being one of the best barbers in

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Paris, and drew to his shop many fops, because in the middle class one held it an honor to be able to say, while caressing one's chin, "I've been shaved by Touquet." But those whom he had served sometimes remained for a long time in conversation with the persons who were awaiting their turn, the greater part of these idlers desiring to chat for a moment on the news of the day and the adventures of the night. Towards ten o'clock in the morning there was always a numerous gathering at Master Touquet's shop.

There one saw all kinds of toilets; but then, as today, rich garments did not always betoken rank or fortune in those who wore them. The taste for luxury was becoming general, because consideration was accorded only to those who had splendid equipages and magnificent clothing. An appearance of wealth and power obtained all the honors; true merit without distinction, without renown, remained forgotten and in poverty. And one assuredly sees the same thing today.

Access to court was easy. For a parvenu to introduce himself there, often nothing more was necessary than a costume similar to those worn by courtiers, — the hat adorned by a feather, a doublet and mantle of satin or velvet, the sword at the belt, the whole enlivened by trimmings of gold or silver braid. Each sought to procure for himself the most splendid personal appearance, and many ruined themselves in order to appear wealthy.

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An attempt was, however, made to arrest this tendency to luxurious habits, which could not hide the poverty of the time. By an edict of the month of November of the year 1633, it was forbidden to all subjects to wear on their shirts, cuffs, head-dresses, or on other linen, all openwork, embroideries of gold or silver thread, braids, laces or cut points, manufactured either within or without the realm.

In the following year a second edict appeared, which prohibited the employment, in habiliments, of any kind of cloth of gold or silver, real or imitation, and decreed that the richest garments should be of velvet, satin or taffetas, without other ornament than two bands of silk embroidery; it also forbade that the liveries of pages, lackeys and coachmen should be made of any other than woollen stuffs. But these laws were soon infringed; men will always have the desire to appear more than they are, and women to hide what they are.

Among the different personages assembled in the barber's shop there was one who chatted with nobody and seemed to take not the slightest interest in the relation of the scandalous adventures of the night. This was a young man who appeared about nineteen years of age or a little over, endowed with a physiognomy by no means cheerful; for one ordinarily applies that term to those round, fresh faces, red and plump, which breathe health and gayety. He had beautiful eyes, but was pale;

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noble features, but rather a melancholy expression; finally, he had what one calls an interesting face, and this sort are in general more fortunate in love than those of cheerful physiognomy. The young man's costume was very simple; neither ornament nor embroidery adorned his gray coat, buttoned just to the knee and cut like our frock coat of today; his belt was black; no ribbons floated from his knees and his arms; he neither had a sword nor laces, nor plumes on the broad brim of his hat.

He had been for a very long time in the barber's shop. On entering, his eyes had appeared to search for something other than the master of the place; he had thrown glances towards the back shop, and still continued to do so. Several times already his turn had come and Touquet had said to him, —

"Whenever you wish, seigneur bachelor."

The young man's simple costume was, in fact, that which was ordinarily worn by law students in Paris; but to each invitation of the barber the bachelor only answered, "I am not pressed for time," and another took his place.

After a time the loiterers and gossips departed and the young man found himself alone with Touquet, to whom his conduct began to appear singular.

"Now you can no longer yield your turn to anybody," said the barber, offering a chair to the stranger. "In truth I cannot shave you; you have not enough on your chin; but without doubt you

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came for something, and I am at your service, monsieur."

"Yes," said the young man with an embarrassed air, turning his eyes towards the back shop, "I should like — my hair is too long, and — "

"Seat yourself here, seigneur bachelor; you will find that I am skilful; my hand is as well accustomed to the scissors as to the razor."

The young man decided at last to intrust his head to the barber, but as soon as the latter paused for a moment he profited by it to turn and look into the back shop.

"Are you looking for anything, monsieur?" said Touquet, whom this trick did not escape.

"No — no. I was only looking to see if you were alone here."

"Yes, monsieur; you see I have no need of anybody to help me in order to satisfy my customers."

"Indeed, someone told me you were extremely skilful."

"And monsieur has had time to judge of my talent, he has been nearly two hours in my shop."

"I had nothing pressing to do; and then, I wished to obtain some information of you. Tell me, my friend, who occupies the first story of this house."

"I do, monsieur," said Touquet, after a moment's hesitation.

The young man seemed vexed then that he had asked the question.

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"May I learn, monsieur, how that interests you?" resumed Touquet, looking at the unknown attentively.

"Ah, it is that I am looking for a lodging—in this quarter. One chamber would suffice me. Do you not take lodgers, and could you give me a room if this house belongs to you?"

"This house does belong to me; in fact, monsieur, I cannot grant your request. For a long time I have let no lodgings, and I have no room in the house, which is not very large."

"What! you cannot let me a single chamber, a closet even? I repeat to you, I wish to have one in this neighborhood; I often have business in the Louvre. I will pay you anything that you ask."

"Anything?" said the barber, glancing ironically at the young man's simple garments. "You are getting on, perhaps, a little, monsieur student. All the same, your desires cannot be gratified, and I advise you to renounce your plans."

Touquet dwelt on this last phrase, and the young man's face reddened a little; but the barber had finished his ministrations, and the former had no way of prolonging his stay with a man who did not appear to wish to continue the conversation, and to whom he feared he had said too much. The bachelor rose, paid, and at last left the shop, but not without looking up at the windows of the house.

"That's a lover," said Touquet, as soon as the

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young man had taken his departure. "Yes, his uneasiness, his looks, his questions — oh, I understand it all. I have served too many lovers ever to be deceived about that. Curse it! this is just what I feared. What vexations I foresee! What anxieties are about to assail me! He must have seen Blanche, but where? when? how? She never leaves the house without me, and that very rarely; however, this young man is in love with her, I'll bet a hundred pieces of gold. Halloo there, Marguerite! Marguerite!"

The old servant had heard her master's loud voice; she mentally invoked her patron saint and went down to the shop.

"How long is it since Blanche went out without my knowing it?" said the barber suddenly.

"Went out? Mademoiselle Blanche?" said Marguerite, looking at her master in surprise.

"Yes, — went out with you. Why don't you answer?"

"Blessed Holy Virgin! that hasn't happened for two years; then Mademoiselle Blanche was still a child, and you sometimes allowed her to go with me to take a turn in the big Pré-aux-Clercs. But since that time the poor little thing has not been out, I believe, except twice with you, and that was at night, and Mademoiselle Blanche had a very thick veil."

"I didn't ask you if she had been out with me. And has any young man been here in my

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absence who has asked you about her, or who has sought to be introduced to her?"

"Indeed, I would have given him a warm reception. Monsieur doesn't know me. Except the Chevalier Chaudoreille, mademoiselle has seen no one; as to the latter, he came this morning to give her a music lesson."

"Oh, Chaudoreille isn't dangerous; but if some student, some young page, should come in my absence and seek to see Blanche, remember to send such heedless fellows away promptly."

"Yes, monsieur, yes. Oh, you may be easy. Besides, hasn't the beautiful child always about her a precious talisman which will preserve her from all danger? I defy ten gallants to turn her head so long as she carries it, and I will see that she does not leave it off."

"Watch, rather, that she does not open her window; that will be better. If that should happen, I should be obliged to give her the little room which opens on the court."

"Ah, monsieur, Mademoiselle Blanche would die there of weariness; there one can barely see the light, and the poor little thing does not go out, and could only work during the daytime with a candle."

"Unless she opens her window, it will be a long time before she occupies it," said Touquet in a low voice, making a sign to the servant to leave him, which the latter did, saying, —

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"What a misfortune not to have faith in talismans! If monsieur believed in them, he would not deprive that poor little thing of every amusement."

The barber had not been mistaken in judging that the young man, who had had so much difficulty in tearing himself away from the shop, was a lover.

The Italian's song had so captivated Blanche's ears that the young girl had stood close to her casement, and had not budged from it during the time that her music master had made his variations on the villanelle. At the same moment Urbain was passing, and he had stopped to listen to the music, and while listening his glance was carried to Blanche's window. At first he had seen nothing but some very small panes; but at last, through these panes, his eyes could distinguish a face so pretty, eyes so blue and so full of the pleasure that Blanche was experiencing, that the young man had remained motionless, his looks fixed upon that window, near which the charming apparition remained. When the music ceased the pretty face disappeared, and the young man had said to himself, —

"I was not in error; there is an angel, a divinity, in that house."

And as that angel, that divinity, lived in the modest house of a barber, the bachelor had believed he should penetrate into the third heaven

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in entering Master Touquet's shop; but he returned to ideas more terrestrial on seeing nothing but men who had come to be shaved, who had about them nothing divine, despite all the essences with which their chins were besmeared. Urbain had glanced towards the back shop, hoping to perceive the pretty figure of the first floor, and had prolonged as much as possible his stay in the barber's shop. We have witnessed the result of his conversation with the barber.

The young man departed, very much out of sorts; he perceived that he had made a blunder in questioning the barber, who was probably his adored one's father; for the young men of that time were inflamed with love as quickly as those of today. He felt that before going into the shop he should have obtained some information in the neighborhood, and he decided to finish as he should have begun. In all times the bakers have had very correct ideas about their neighbors, because the neighbors are all obliged to go or to send to the baker's. Urbain went into a shop at a little distance, and while paying for some rolls entered into conversation with the woman who was behind the counter, — a conversation in which all the servants who arrived at that moment took part.

"Do you know a barber in this street?"

"A barber? Yes, my good monsieur; down there at the corner of the Rue Saint-Honoré, — Master Touquet. Has monsieur some business

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with him? Oh, he's a very skilful man at his trade, and has made lots of money, by shaving beards, or in some other way. What that is I won't pretend to tell you. That's so — isn't it, Madame Ledoux?"

"It is true," said Madame Ledoux, resting a basket of vegetables on the counter, "that Touquet has not always enjoyed an excellent reputation. I have lived in the neighborhood for eight years and, thank God, I know everything that has passed here, — all that everybody has done here, and all that everybody is still doing; and that reminds me that yesterday evening I saw Madame Grippart come home at ten o'clock with a young man, who left her in front of the grocer's shop after having held her hand in his for more than two hours, while that poor Grippart was peacefully slumbering, for he goes to bed at nine o'clock. That doesn't trouble him; he well deserves it, for he went about everywhere saying that his wife had a strong breath, and those things need not be said. — But to return to Master Touquet. Oh, that's a sly blade, a crafty, cunning fellow. I've known him since he settled in this street; he's been here nearly fifteen years. He rented the house which belonged to M. Richard. You know, my neighbor, the old cloth merchant?"

"The one whose wife had two fat, plump twins seven months after they were married?"

"Who didn't look at all like their father. It's

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the same. Well, this Touquet was then barber, bathkeeper and lodging-house keeper, and report says that beside that he helped young men of family in their love affairs. He then kept two shopmen, and should have made money; however, he was for a long time miserably poor, since his shopmen left him because he did not pay them. Everyone was very much astonished ten years ago when Touquet kept with him, and began to educate as his own child, the daughter of a man whom he did not know, who had come to lodge with him by chance, and who was killed the same night in a fight between some worthless fellows and the officers of the watch. The poor man! they found his corpse down there, — Rue Saint-Honoré, before the draper's shop. Do you remember it, Madame Legras?"

Madame Legras, who had just come into the baker's shop, began by throwing herself on a chair and crying, —

"Good-day, ladies! Good Heavens! how dear the fish is today, nobody can look at it."

And Urbain sighed, saying, "The fish will take us away from the barber"; but to advance in love one must often have patience, and in the midst of all this gossip that which concerned Touquet was precious to the young bachelor.

"I wished to have an eel to feast my husband, but it was impossible."

"Is it his birthday?"

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"No; but he took me yesterday for a walk around the Bastile, and one compliment brings on another. I can say with pride that there are few households so united as ours. During the four years that I have been married to my second husband, M. Legras, we have quarrelled only five times; but that was always for some trifling cause. What were you talking about, ladies?"

"Of our neighbor Touquet, about whom this gentleman desired some information."

"Touquet the barber? My word, ladies, you may say whatever you will, but I don't like that man."

"He's a very handsome man, however."

"Yes, of the same height as M. Legras; but there is something hard and false and stern in his appearance."

"Yes, for some time past; formerly he was gayer, more open. Now monsieur never chats; he has grown proud."

"That's not surprising; he has made money."

"Yes, by shaving beards perhaps."

"It's a good deal more likely he has made it by assisting the love affairs of some great nobleman, in procuring and abducting some beauty."

"Come, ladies, don't be so malicious. As for me, you know I haven't a bad tongue. Touquet is very skilful at his trade. I know very well that in order to buy and pay for that house where he now is he must have shaved a good many faces;

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but they say now the barber is very steady and economical."

"When the devil is old — "

"Touquet is not old; he's hardly over forty years."

"Adopting that little girl should have brought him good luck."

"That's what I was telling monsieur. Poor little thing! Nobody knows anything about her, except that she had a father."

"Well, neighbor, somebody found a letter on him having for an address, 'To Monsieur Moranval, gentleman.'"

"Ah, he was a gentleman?"

"Yes, my dear. Oh, I remember all that as if it were yesterday."

"How fortunate one is in having such a memory! And what did the letter say?"

"It seemed that there were only a few lines of which nobody could make much of anything; someone recommended to this Moranval to take great precautions in the business which brought him to Paris. But what business? Nobody knows anything about it."

"Did they find nothing else on him?"

"No; there is little doubt that the poor man was robbed after being murdered."

"Did they go to Touquet's to inquire what he knew about it?"

"Touquet answered the officers of justice that

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the man had come down to his house the evening before, and had introduced himself as a gentleman who was about to remain for some time in Paris; that he had first asked him to put his little girl to bed, and that later he had gone out, saying he should be absent for an hour or so. Touquet had waited up for him a great part of the night, and it was not till the next day that he learned from public rumor that a man had been found murdered in the Rue Saint-Honoré, a short distance from his house; that, being already uneasy about his guest, he had gone to see the victim, and had recognized the man who had arrived at his place the evening before."

"I hope that's a history. Unfortunately, one hears only too many similar stories. Ours are really cut-throat streets, and it is not well, after nine o'clock, to be out in them. The gentlemen of the parliament make decrees often enough, but it doesn't do much good. A little while ago, it seems a counsellor of the Chamber of Investigation was similarly murdered. The parliament has just promulgated a new ordinance against these worthless fellows — haven't they, monsieur?"

"Yes," said Urbain; "the public prosecutor has just complained of murders, assassinations and robberies, which take place every day, as many upon the highways as in the city or the suburbs, by armed persons who forcibly break into houses, and that through the negligence of the police officers

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who do not properly perform their duty. Parliament yesterday passed a new decree, ordering that vagabonds, men of bad character, and robbers, should vacate the city and the faubourgs of Paris within twenty-four hours."

"Well, you'll see, tonight we shall hear a bigger rumpus than ever."

"And the barber Touquet is not married?" resumed Urbain, who wished to return to the subject of conversation which was interesting to him.

"No, he's a bachelor," said Madame Ledoux.

"And this young girl that lodges with him —"

"She's the little one whom he adopted."

"She had no other protectors?"

"What could you expect, since nobody knew her parents? Touquet has, they say, taken very good care of her; I will do him the justice to say that. He has taken into his house, to wait on the little one, a servant, old Marguerite, a gossip, who is always seeking for preservatives against the wind, the thunder, the sorcerers, or even for talismans to guard her dear Blanche against the snares of the gallants."

"Blanche, then, is the name of the young girl?"

"Yes; that is her name."

"And this old woman is the only one about her?"

"Mercy! isn't that enough? Besides, the little one never goes out, and no one ever sees her even put her nose out of the window."

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"Tell me, ladies, don't you think, with me, that the barber has brought up this pretty child for himself, and that he would not take so much care of her unless he was in love with her?"

"Indeed, that might very well be possible. Touquet is still young, and perhaps wishes to marry her."

"Nonsense! I don't believe that; and besides, they say that the young person is not good-looking. I have heard it said by an ugly little thin man, with a long sword, who is often at the barber's shop, that the orphan is very ugly."

"Ugly!" cried Urbain quickly. "That's a frightful lie!"

"Ah, monsieur has seen her, then?" immediately said the gossips, looking at the young man with a mischievous air.

The latter felt that he had committed an imprudence; but having nothing more to learn from these dames, he made them a low bow and left the shop, leaving the gossips to talk among themselves.

"Well, if he hasn't gone, and he didn't tell us what he wanted with Touquet."

But Urbain had learned enough; and while directing his steps toward the Rue Montmartre, where he dwelt, our lover cogitated thus:—

"She's not the barber's daughter; he has stood to her in place of a father, but he has no rights over her except those accorded to a benefactor by

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a grateful heart. She's the daughter of a gentleman, which is much better; my father was a gentleman also, who valiantly fought under King Henry. The old soldiers still remember Captain Dorgeville, and the name which he has transmitted to me is pure and without stain. I am alone in the world; I am my own master. Like her I have no parents, for a year ago death deprived me of my good mother. My fortune is very moderate, — twelve hundred livres income and a little house by the seaside. That is all my father left me; but she has nothing more, and by working I could render her happy. I am about to take my bachelor's degree, but I shall now leave this unfruitful career; science brings fortune too slowly. I don't know, however, if I could please her. Yes, that's the first task with which I should occupy myself. If she loves me, I will ask her hand of the barber. He will wish to assure her happiness; he could not refuse me unless he himself — If these women said rightly he is in love with her. The hard tone with which he answered me this morning, his refusal to lodge me in his house, make me believe it. And that wretch who dared to say that she was ugly! — when object more enchanting never met my eyes. Ah, it wasn't of her he was speaking. If such a thing could happen, I should like to see her, to tell her of the love which she has inspired; and, if I could manage to please her, nothing then could prevent me from becoming her husband."

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These were, somebody will say, very foolish plans concerning a young girl whose face one had only perceived through some very dim window-panes; and it was on the possession of this almost ideal object that Urbain already based the happiness of his life. But let us look back on our own lives. We were hardly more reasonable, — happy if between us and the chimeras which enchanted us there was nothing thicker than a pane of glass.

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CHAPTER VII

Intrigues Thicken

Chaudoreille now started off at a great pace towards the city. The ten crowns which he felt in his purse, on which he prudently kept his hand while walking, caused him to hold his head even more arrogantly than he usually did. He had placed his little hat over his left eye in such a manner that the old red feather with which it was adorned fell precisely over his right eye, and as he walked mincingly along, at each step that he took the chevalier could thus enjoy the waving of his ridiculous plume.

Never had the Chevalier de Chaudoreille felt so clever, so inordinately satisfied with himself. Blanche's image, so sweet, so beautiful, her delightful manner, which possessed all the innocent witchery of girlhood, was still before his eyes, and as he was never lacking in confidence as to his own merits, he readily persuaded himself that the young beauty could not see him with indifference, and was even a little taken with him. On the other hand, the enterprise with which he was charged by the barber, as the agent of the Marquis de Villebelle, flattered his self-love. He

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believed himself the friend, the confidant, of the Marquis de Villebelle, although the latter had never spoken to him; but he thought that the adroitness with which he would serve him in his amorous plan would be sooner or later known to the great nobleman and would win his favor. Full of this idea, he hastened to reach the shop of which Touquet had spoken. Before entering, Chaudoreille resumed to himself,—

"One mustn't go in here," said he, "looking like a snob, and turn the shop upside down without buying anything. I must not forget that I am sent by a great personage. They have given me ten crowns on account, as the price of my services, but I can very well spend twenty-four sous."

This determination taken, he opened the door of the shop and entered nimbly; but in wheeling round in order to appear more graceful and to bow at the same time to the right and left, he sent Rolande's scabbard through one of the panes of the glass door, and it broke in a thousand pieces.

Chaudoreille's face lengthened and he felt some confusion, for he calculated that the price of the pane already exceeded the sum he had intended to lay out. Two young persons seated behind the counter burst into laughter, while an old woman placed opposite murmured between her teeth,—

"He must be very awkward."

"I will pay for it," said Chaudoreille at last, heaving a big sigh.

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"Indeed I should hope so," responded the shopkeeper; "but has anyone ever seen a man carry a sword bigger than himself?"

At these words the chevalier drew himself up and stood on his tiptoes, and glanced angrily at the old woman.

"It's very astonishing," said he, "that anyone should permit herself such reflections. I carry the weapon that suits me, and if a bearded chin had said the same thing to me, my sword would have immediately taken the measure of his body."

"I didn't intend to say anything to make you angry," replied the shopkeeper, softening; "only it seemed to me that that long sword would embarrass you in walking."

"Embarrass me! That is a different thing," and Chaudoreille turned his back to the shopkeeper to approach the young ladies, saying to himself, —

"I didn't come here to discuss the length of my sword. Let's leave this woman's twaddle."

"What do you wish, monsieur?" said a young, squint-eyed girl, with a flat nose, thick lips and crooked chin, whose dark-red skin seemed covered with a coat of varnish.

Chaudoreille looked at her for some moments, saying to himself, —

"By jingo! she's not very much like the portrait of the little one which they gave me. It's true that love is blind, and that great noblemen like original faces."

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But after looking at the person who addressed him, Chaudoreille glanced a little farther and perceived another woman measuring some ribbons. At the first glance the barber's messenger recognized the young girl whose portrait had been drawn for him. She was all Touquet had painted her, though he could not then see the color of her eyes, which were bent on the ribbon. Chaudoreille approached her and, bowing graciously, said to himself, —

"This is our affair. I have an astonishing tact for divining correctly. Other people hesitate for an hour; but I recognize immediately those who have been pointed out to me, and I am never deceived. Here are some delightful ribbons," said Chaudoreille, leaning on the counter, carelessly caressing his chin, and trying to imitate the free manners and impertinent tone of the profligates of the day.

The young girl then raised her eyes to the chevalier; their brightness, their expression, arrested Chaudoreille in the midst of a compliment from which he expected the most happy results.

"By jingo! what a glance! what fire!" said he, taking a step backward, while the damsel continued to look at him.

In order to enchant her he attempted to turn a light pirouette, in which Rolande's scabbard just missed putting out the eye of the cat, which was lying on a neighboring stool. A mocking smile

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played on the lips of the young girl, who said, "What ribbon does monsieur wish?"

"What ribbon? My faith! I don't much know. Something to match the rest of my costume. It is to make a knot for Rolande."

"And who is Rolande, monsieur?"

"My sword, beautiful brunette, which I will pass through the body of him who denies that you have the most beautiful eyes in the world."

Delighted at his compliment, Chaudoreille said to himself in an undertone, —

"Take care; we mustn't go too far, or be too amiable; I must not forget that I did not come here on my own account. This young girl appears somewhat smitten, from the way she looks at me. Zounds! if I had a ruff I would with goodwill cheat the Marquis de Villebelle of the little one. Come, Chaudoreille, hide your charms if you can; don't dart your glances at this pretty person, and hasten to tell her that she must not occupy herself with you."

While saying this Chaudoreille unrolled and examined twenty different ribbons, approaching them to the handle of his sword and throwing from time to time a glance about him, to assure himself that he could speak without being heard by the other two women in the shop.

This manœuvre did not escape the eyes of the young girl, who smiled, and seemed to wait for Chaudoreille to explain himself. Happily for

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Chaudoreille, two people came into the shop, and while the old woman and the other damsel were serving them, he opened a conversation in a low tone.

"I did not come here only to buy a ribbon, celestial merchant."

"If you wish anything else, speak, monsieur, and you shall be served."

"Julia, have you not finished with monsieur?" said the old woman impatiently, looking angrily at the long falchion of the chevalier, which, every time he moved, threatened her cat's eyes.

"Monsieur has not decided yet," answered Julia, while Chaudoreille cried with an impertinent air, —

"It seems to me that I should be allowed to choose my own colors. When a man like me comes into a shop, one should, my good woman, keep him there as long as possible; if you wish to have my custom, leave me to chat as much as I please with this beautiful child."

This insolent mode of speech was then so much in fashion, that she remained silent, in place of putting the chevalier out, as would be done now to a coxcomb who behaved like Chaudoreille.

"Oh, by jingo! if one did not keep these little shopkeepers in their place I believe they would permit themselves to make observations to us," said Chaudoreille, approaching for the twentieth time a gold-colored ribbon to his doublet. "This

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color goes very well with my cloak. What do you think of it, adorable damsel?"

"I think that these ribbons are too fresh to blend with monsieur's clothing, and that that one swears at them."

"I confess that the velvet of my jerkin is a little tarnished, but what could you expect? When a man fights he necessarily attracts dust and powder. Here's a cloak that I've not had more than six weeks, and I'll wager that you would say it had been worn for some months."

"Decide on your ribbon, monsieur," said the young girl, without answering.

"Give me a gold-colored rosette," said Chaudoreille; and he added in a mysterious tone, "I have something very important to communicate to you."

"I doubt it," said Julia.

"Come," said Chaudoreille to himself, "I'll wager that she believes that I'm in love with her and is impatiently awaiting my declaration. I'm incorrigible; I let myself go, and I have turned her head without even perceiving it. Let us hasten to disabuse her. — No, beautiful brunette, you need not doubt it," responded he, lowering his eyes with a coquettish air; "I ought to confess to you that it is not of myself that I seek you, and that I am only the ambassador of Love, when you would have taken me for Love himself."

Julia's hearty laughter prevented Chaudoreille

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from continuing, and he did not know at first how to take this excessive gayety; but his self-love always made him place things to his own advantage, and he decided to laugh also, while saying in a low tone to the young girl, —

"Isn't it very funny to behold in me a lover's messenger? — I, who could cheat them all of their conquests. It's a great joke, in truth."

"Come, monsieur ambassador, give me your message," said Julia, looking pityingly at the envoy.

Chaudoreille threw a glance all around him, put a finger on his mouth, examined the persons who were in the shop, pushed from him a stool on which the cat was lying, then leaning toward Julia with the air of a conspirator, he whispered in her ear, —

"A great lord sent me to you. He's a rich and powerful man; he's a personage in favor; he's the gallant who —"

"He's the Marquis de Villebelle," said Julia impatiently. "I've known him for a long time. What does he want with me? What has he bidden you say to me? Come, monsieur, speak."

"It must be that I am very adroit," said Chaudoreille, "when without my speaking she divines everything that I wish to say to her. — Since you know his name," resumed he, again approaching his face to Julia's ear, the latter brusquely pushing him away, "I have no need of telling you. This great nobleman adores you."

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"Undoubtedly he did not employ you to express his sentiments."

"No, but he sent me to ask you to meet him. If you do not accord him this favor, he will set fire to the four corners of this street, that he may have the pleasure of saving you, fair Julia, — for it is thus I believe that you are called, which makes me think that you are not French. Have I rightly divined?"

"Has anyone commissioned you to ask that question?" asked Julia, looking at Chaudoreille disdainfully.

The latter bit his lips, put his left hand on his hip, and said in a bass voice, —

"What shall I say to the noble Marquis de Villebelle, of whom I am the intimate confidant, and whom I represent at this moment?"

"Tell him to choose his messengers better," said Julia in a dry tone.

"I was sure of it," said Chaudoreille, taking some steps backward; "she has fallen in love with me; it is my personal attractions that have played me this trick. All this is very disagreeable; I should have disguised myself a little, or at least should not have permitted my eyes to make fresh wounds. There is money to be got here. By jingo! I must not lose sight of that;" and Chaudoreille repeated to Julia, not allowing her, as a matter of prudence, to see more than his profile, —

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"What shall I say to the marquis? Where will you walk tomorrow evening?"

The young girl waited for some moments in silence, appearing to reflect deeply; while Chaudoreille fingered his purse, very anxious as to her answer, and saying to himself, —

"In any case, I shall not give them back the ten crowns.

"Tomorrow evening at eight o'clock, on the Pont de la Tournelle," said the young Italian at last; for Julia, in fact, was not French.

"'Tis enough," responded Chaudoreille, continuing to hold himself in such a manner as to show only his profile; "I have nothing more to ask of you; let us part, for fear the sight of me make you change your resolution."

The messenger already had hold of the knob of the door when Julia recalled him.

"You have forgotten to pay for your ribbon, monsieur."

"By Jove! that's true. What the devil has got me? I'm as stupid as possible."

While saying this Chaudoreille drew forth his purse, rattling the ten crowns that it held as loudly as possible, counting and recounting them several times in his hand.

"I don't know if I have any change about me," said he. "Ordinarily I carry nothing but gold, it is so much lighter. How much is it, beautiful merchant?"

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"Thirty sous, monsieur."

"Thirty sous for a rosette!" cried Chaudoreille to himself, making a grimace, and putting the coins back in his purse. "That seems to me a considerable price. You must notice that the ribbon is very narrow."

"For a man who carries nothing but gold," said Julia, "I am astonished that monsieur should bargain over such a trifle."

"I'm not bargaining; but still it seems to me that you might knock something off, and that for twenty-four sous one ought to have a superb rosette. No matter; I'll pay it with a good grace; give me my change."

He presented one of the crowns with a sigh, and while Julia was counting out his change he fastened the gold-colored rosette to Rolande's handle. The effect that the ribbon would produce somewhat mitigated his regrets at paying thirty sous for it. He took the money, and, recalling to himself that they could ask him to pay for something else, he ran to the door, darted into the street and disappeared as quickly as possible.

"And my window-pane," said the old shopkeeper, — "did he pay for my pane?"

"Ah, mon Dieu! no, madame," answered Julia.

"I was sure of it. Run, my good girls, run as fast as you can. That wicked coxcomb, trying to play the spark, with his old threadbare mantle, with his old feather that I wouldn't take to dust

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my shelves! He turned everything upside down here, and just barely missed putting out my cat's eyes; he was impertinent to me, bargained for two hours over a rosette, and ran away without paying for the pane. He's some pickpocket, some cutpurse."

The two damsels opened the shop door and looked down the street, but could see nothing of monsieur le chevalier.

"It's my fault, madame," said Julia; "I should have asked him for the price of the window. I will pay for it."

"Yes, mademoiselle; that will teach you another time not to listen to the conversation of these gentlemen who make so much trouble and haven't a sou in their pockets."

The young Italian did not answer. It is probable that at that moment she was not interested in the pane of glass or in Chaudoreille.

Night approached. For some hours all had been silent in the barber's shop; for he, following his habitual custom, had closed his shutters as soon as day declined, since he was not in the habit of receiving strangers and waited on no customers in the evening. This was the time that Touquet had chosen for his dinner hour, although people commonly took this meal much earlier. The barber's dinner, therefore, also passed for a supper.

As soon as Marguerite called from her kitchen, "We are waiting for you, mademoiselle," Blanche

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left her room and quickly went down into the lower room where the meal was served. Touquet dined with the young girl. This was the moment of the day when they were longest together, although the barber always appeared to wish to abridge the time as much as possible, remaining at the table only as long as was absolutely necessary in order to satisfy his appetite, and answering only in monosyllables to all that Blanche said to him, so as not to prolong the duration of the repast.

This time the barber was, as usual, seated near the hearth, waiting for Blanche to come down; but when she appeared, contrary to his custom, he raised his eyes to the young girl and seemed to wish to read hers. Surprised at being thus regarded by him whose looks had always evaded her smile, Blanche involuntarily lowered her eyes, which beamed with truth and innocence, and a little more color appeared in her cheeks; for the barber's look was more piercing than usual.

Touquet already seemed reassured. The expression of Blanche's features had dissipated the uneasiness which he had felt; he placed himself at the table and made a sign to the lovely girl to take her accustomed place. The meal seemed as though it would pass in silence as usual; Marguerite only, while changing the dishes, ventured some remarks, to which Blanche answered a few words.

But all of a sudden the young girl appeared to recall an agreeable idea, and cried, —

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"My friend, did you hear the music this morning?"

"The music," said Touquet, glancing furtively at Blanche; "yes, I believe I heard it."

"Oh, it was so pretty! They sang in Italian at first; then afterwards in French, — a romance. Wait; I believe I can remember the refrain," and Blanche sang with expression, —

"I love to eternity,
My darling is all to me."

The barber knitted his thick eyebrows while listening to Blanche.

"What! you have already learned the romance?" said he in an ironical tone.

"No, not all the romance; the refrain only."

"And that was the first time you had heard it?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Did you open your window then?"

"No, though I should very much have liked to do so; but I glued myself against the window so as to hear better."

"And to see better, no doubt."

"See! Oh, I like to hear much better," answered Blanche, almost frightened at the barber's glance.

"Are there no curtains at your window?" asked Touquet in a moment.

"Yes, monsieur, there are curtains," answered the young girl timidly.

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"Blanche, I've told you that I don't like you to expose yourself to the oglings of the coxcombs who pass and repass in the street."

"But, my friend, can anyone see me through the windows?"

"Yes; no doubt of it."

"Oh, well, my friend, if that displeases you, I won't go to the window again."

Touched by Blanche's sweetness, the barber assumed a less severe expression, and, rising from the table, he said, almost kindly, —

"Go back to your room, Blanche; I will try soon to render your life less monotonous. Yes, I feel that you cannot continually remain in such dull retirement."

"Why, I am all right, my friend; and if I could only learn that romance altogether, but M. Chaudoreille only sings me his villanelle, and that is not amusing."

"I will buy you some others."

"Oh, try to get me the one I heard this morning, —

I love to eternity.

Can you remember it?"

"Yes, yes; I will remember it. — But I am waiting for someone to come; go upstairs to your room."

Blanche curtseyed to the barber and gayly went up to her room, while Touquet said to himself, following her with his eyes, —

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"Come, I was wrong to make myself uneasy; she knows nothing of him."

An hour after this conversation somebody knocked at the barber's door and Marguerite admitted Chaudoreille, who came into the lower room with the important air of a man who is very well pleased with himself.

"You're very late," said Touquet, signing to him to seat himself.

"Why, what the deuce, my dear fellow! Do you think that these affairs are so speedily arranged?"

"I don't believe, however, that you've been all this time in the shop where I sent you."

"No, undoubtedly; but I passed a greater part of the time there. After that it was necessary for me to have some dinner, for you did not invite me to partake of yours, I believe."

"Well, were you successful? Give me an account of your mission."

"I went there. Wait, while I dry my forehead a little."

The barber made a movement of impatience and Chaudoreille passed over his face a little silk handkerchief, which for prudence' sake he never unrolled. After emitting some exclamations of fatigue, during which Touquet impatiently stamped his foot, he commenced his story.

"To go to that place in the city I could take two roads; I don't know but I could take three."

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"You wretch! take a dozen if you like, but get there."

"It was necessary for me to get there, and then to return here. I decided on going by the Pont-Neuf, then down the quay into the street. You know, where they sell such good tarts."

"Chaudoreille, you're mocking at me."

"No, I'm not; but it seemed to me I should tell you everything that I did. But you are so petulant. Finally, I took the shortest way. I went into the shop where the young girl works."

"That's good luck."

"I entered with that grace which characterizes me; I bowed first to an old woman who was on the right, and afterwards bowed to two young girls who were on the left. In the middle of the shop I saw nobody but a cat sleeping on a stool."

"No doubt you bowed to the cat also."

"Oh, if you interrupt me I shall get all mixed up. They asked me what I wanted; I answered, dissembling my designs, 'Let me see some ribbons.' They showed me some reds, some blues, some greens, some yellows, some oranges; during this time I examined the two little ones. As nature has endowed me with a penetrating eye, I recognized immediately the one you depicted for me."

"You spoke to her?"

"A moment and you shall see how I conducted the matter. I was sufficiently adroit to get her to serve me. She asked me what color I had decided

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upon; but I, with careful cunning, did not decide in order that I might prolong the conversation. At last, by a happy chance, some other people came into the shop; then we were less observed."

"And you told her what had brought you there?"

"I decided first for a gold color, and I got her to make a rosette for Rolande. Wait; don't you think this becomes me well?"

So saying, Chaudoreille rose and put his sword near Touquet's face, who pushed the chevalier rather brusquely into his seat, exclaiming, —

"If I didn't restrain myself I should break every bone in your body to teach you not to abuse my patience thus."

"There's no pleasure in conducting an intrigue with you," said Chaudoreille, a little disconcerted at being reseated so heavily; "but if you wish that I should come to the facts, here I am. I made known to her the intentions of the Marquis de Villebelle."

"His intentions? I didn't communicate them to you."

"That is to say, his love, his passion. At last I demanded a meeting for tomorrow evening."

"Well, what then?"

"She hesitated for a long time, reflected for a long time; then I redoubled my eloquence; I pictured the marquis dying of despair if she repulsed his vows."

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"Idiot! was that necessary?"

"Yes, certainly; it was highly necessary; the little one was weighing it."

"Did she make any wry faces?"

"No; on the contrary, she gave me the most interesting glances."

"Finally, is she coming?"

"Yes, by jingo! she's coming. Yes; but it took me to decide her."

"Tomorrow evening?"

"Yes, at eight o'clock."

"Where is she to be?"

"On the Pont de la Tournelle."

"That's good."

"As soon as I had got her answer, I attached my rosette."

"Excuse me from the rest; I know enough."

"You must know that in bowing too precipitately I broke a pane, for which they made me pay a crown, and for which I hope I shall be reimbursed.—Ah, that's not all; I know that the lady is named Julia, and also that she is an Italian. You see I did not lose any time. Are you pleased with me?"

"Yes, it's not so bad," said Touquet, with a less gloomy expression, approaching a table on which Marguerite had, according to her usual custom, placed some cups and a pewter pot full of wine. "Stop your eternal chatter; I'm well enough pleased with you. Drink a cup of wine."

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"You call exactitude of detail chatter," said Chaudoreille, filling one of the cups up to the brim; "but I was trying to show you that I did not steal the money which you gave me. As for the pane of glass, I had to make that circumstance known to you, for I had only nine crowns remaining. — Ah, I forgot; the gold-colored rosette cost me two crowns, so I've only received seven."

"Two crowns for that miserable knot," said the barber, glancing mockingly at the handle of the sword. "Chaudoreille, you have missed your vocation; you should be a steward; you know how to swell your bills."

"What must I understand by these words, I beg of you?"

"That that rosette did not cost over fifteen sous."

"Yes, for a passer-by, for an unknown, perhaps; but when one represents a great nobleman, shopkeepers fleece him, and I didn't believe that I should haggle. If anyone had asked me three times the price, I should have given it without uttering a word."

"Calm yourself," said Touquet, smiling at the heat with which Chaudoreille tried to prove that he had spent three crowns; "we must reimburse you for your ruff."

"Oh, I'm not uneasy about that, but what shall I do tomorrow? Shall I go to the rendezvous? Shall I carry off the little one?"

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"No; that concerns me only. I can trust you to startle the game for me, but I don't think proper to let you bring it down."

"You know me very little still, my dear Touquet. I believe that you should render more justice to my adroitness and my valor. If you knew how many intrigues I have drawn to a successful end! It's necessary to see me in moments of difficulty. I take precedence over everybody; I would abduct a Venus under the eyes of Mars, and all the Vulcans would not make me afraid."

"I don't doubt it, but I don't want to put you to the proof."

"All the worse for you, for you would see some very surprising things. No obstacle would stop me; when I'm excited I'm an Achilles. Wait; I should just like once, by chance, that you should find yourself in some danger, that you should have need of help; then, as quick as lightning, with Rolande in my hand —"

At this moment a noise was heard in the street, and Touquet, squeezing Chaudoreille's arm exclaimed, —

"Be quiet! be quiet! I hear something."

"What does it matter to us what they are doing in the street? There are, perhaps, some young men laughing and amusing themselves. Let them do it. I tell you, then, that, brandishing my redoubtable sword —"

"Be quiet, then, stupid," resumed the barber,

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holding the chevalier's arm still more tightly; "they are beginning again."

They then distinctly heard the sound of a guitar which someone was playing near the house.

"Someone who loves music," said Chaudoreille.

"Hush! let us listen," said Touquet, whose features expressed the most lively anxiety, while the chevalier murmured in a bass voice, —

"They don't play at all well; they have need of some of my lessons."

Almost immediately a voice was heard which, accompanied by the guitar, sang a tender romance, of which the refrain recalled to the barber the words which Blanche had quoted to him.

"No more doubt of it," said Touquet, rising suddenly; "they are singing to her. Ah, reckless fellow, I'll go and take away from you all desire to return here."

While saying these words the barber ran to get his poniard, which hung over the fireplace, while Chaudoreille changed color and murmured, —

"What the devil is the matter with you? What are you going to do? and who are you going to do it to?"

"To an insolent fellow who is in front of this house. Come, Chaudoreille; follow me. If there were ten of them, they should have the pleasure of feeling my poniard. You shall also have the pleasure of chasing and chastising these blackguards."

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While saying this Touquet ran into the shop and hastened to open the door, being by that means sooner in the street than if he had gone by the passageway. While he precipitately drew the bolts, Chaudoreille rose with a good deal of fury and ran three times round the hall, crying, —

"Where the devil have I laid my sword?"

This feat accomplished, he perceived that Rolande had not left his side, and cried to Touquet, who could not hear him, —

"Stupid that I am! In my hurry I did not see him. I am with you; I have only to draw him from the scabbard. — Come then, Rolande. — It is this cursed knot which holds him. Plague be on the rosette! Touquet, here I am; amuse them a little until I can draw Rolande from the scabbard."

But the barber was already in the street, while Chaudoreille remained at the back of the room, appearing to be making futile efforts to draw his sword, crying all the while, —

"I am with you! Cursed rosette! Without it I should have already killed five or six."

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CHAPTER VIII

Conversation by the Fireside

It was really for little Blanche that somebody was singing and accompanying himself on the guitar. Lovers are the most imprudent of mortals. Urbain in loving Blanche was experiencing love for the first time, for he would have scorned to have given the name of love to those momentary caprices of the fancy which are extinguished as soon as gratified; and even at the early date at which we are writing, the young men permitted themselves to have such whims; but when they loved truly that lasted in those good old times, or so they say, much longer than it does to-day, at least among the little shopkeepers. The great have always had their privileges, in love as in everything else.

A first love causes one to commit many imprudences; but the second time that one's heart is assailed by the tender passion, one has a little more experience; and the third time, one knows how to hide his play. It is necessary to become habituated to everything; and if women do not invariably hold to their first love, are not invariably faithful to it, it is only that they may acquire

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this habituation, and it would ill become us to call it a crime in them.

But Urbain disturbed himself very little, as it will appear; he had unceasingly before his eyes the face of the enchantress he had perceived at the window, and he ardently desired to see her when there should be nothing between them. What he had heard from the gossips of the neighborhood had strengthened his hope and perhaps added to the feeling he already experienced for her, for there was something romantic in the history of the young orphan; extraordinary events inflame the imagination, and that of a lover takes fire very easily.

But before seeking to surmount the obstacles which stood in the way of gaining the one he loved it was first necessary to obtain her love, without which all his plans could avail him nothing. One may brave the jealousy of a rival, the watchfulness of a tutor, anger, vengeance, and the daggers of a thousand Arguses; but one cannot brave the indifference of the beloved object. Before that obstacle all prospects of happiness vanish. A very much smitten lover wishes to find a heart which responds to his own. That brutal love which is satisfied with the possession of the body, without caring for that of the soul, could only exist among the petty tyrants of former times, who plundered travellers and achieved the conquest of women at the point of the sword; then, putting their

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victims behind them on their horses, as a custom-house officer possesses himself of contraband goods, went off to enjoy themselves with their booty in the depths of their fastness, troubling themselves very little that the unhappy creatures responded to their loathsome caresses only with tears.

Today love is more delicate. Before everything, one desires to please; and with his guineas the great lord wishes to touch the heart as well as the hand of the pretty dancer; and he succeeds, because dancers generally carry their hearts in their hands.

While taking his humble meal Urbain said to himself, —

"How shall I see her? How shall I make myself known to her? Blanche — what a pretty name! and how well it suits her! But the barber doesn't seem very tractable; his house is a veritable fortress. It is necessary, before everything, that that charming girl should know that I love her, that I adore her. This morning she listened to the musicians, and appeared to be greatly pleased with the last romance they sang. I know that romance; I'll go this evening and sing it under her window; perhaps she will show herself; perhaps at night she opens her window to take the air."

The air was a little nipping, for the season was severe; but a lover always believes it is spring-

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time. Delighted by the idea Urbain went home to get his guitar, and waited impatiently, until the streets should be deserted, to go and serenade a woman whom he did not know.

This Spanish custom was then much in fashion in France. There are still some little towns where it is preserved, and where one may hear between ten and eleven o'clock sentimental songs accompanied by the guitar; but in the great capitals it is only the blind and the organ-grinders who sing love in the streets.

The hour propitious to lovers having arrived, Urbain went to the Rue des Bourdonnais; he had easily recognized the barber's house, having specially noted it in the morning; a feeble light which shone between the curtains of Blanche's window seemed to indicate that the young girl was not yet sleeping, and, without reflecting that the other dwellers in the house would hear him, Urbain had sung with the most tender expression he could put in his voice.

We have seen what followed on this imprudence. At the sound of bolts being drawn, the young man softly departed, and, hiding at the entrance of the Rue des Mauvaises-Paroles, he heard the threats and the swearing of Touquet.

"He's escaped," said the barber, reëntering the lower room and angrily throwing his sword on the table. These words seemed to break the charm which held Rolande in his scabbard; and Chau-

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doreille, drawing his sword suddenly, and making it flash in the air, ran precipitately into the shop, crying, —

"And now, master singers, I'll let you see something fierce."

"Don't I tell you there's no one there," repeated Touquet, while Chaudoreille appeared to wish to draw the bolts of the door. "I made too much noise; the rascal heard me and ran off."

"Are you quite certain there's nobody there?" said Chaudoreille, still brandishing his sword.

"Yes, quite sure."

"I have a great inclination to go into the street and satisfy myself as to that."

"Do as you please about it; you are your own master."

"No; on reflection, I believe that would be a blunder; they may perhaps come back; it will be better to let them approach without fear; then we can fall suddenly upon them, and give them no quarter."

So saying, the chevalier put Rolande into the scabbard and returned to the lower room, where he seated himself before the fire and again filled his cup with wine, which he swallowed at one draught, to cool — so he said — his anger.

The barber strode up and down; he was strongly agitated, and appeared to have forgotten the presence of Chaudoreille, as he murmured at intervals in a gloomy voice, —

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"That which I feared has happened at last! That beautiful bud has been seen, and they will all wish to cull it. They will seek to learn who she is, where she comes from; there will be a thousand remarks, a thousand inquiries, and who knows where that will lead? Bungling fellow that I am! I well had need to guard the child. I believed I had made a master stroke which would disarm all suspicion. I ought to have foreseen that one day she would be sixteen, that she would be charming, and that in order to possess her they would employ all the stratagems which I have often used on behalf of others."

"My dear fellow," said Chaudoreille, carrying to his lips for the third time a goblet filled to the brim, "my honest Touquet, if you don't want to take care of the little one any longer, give her to me, and I'll answer to you for it that no fop shall be allowed to see her face."

"What shall I give you?" said the barber, as if he had only just become aware of Chaudoreille's presence. "What are you talking about? Answer me!"

"Oh, by jingo. you were speaking of the young flower you have sheltered; I heard you very plainly."

"You heard me!" cried Touquet, seizing Chaudoreille by the arm with which he was holding his full cup; "and what did I say? What did you hear? Speak, wretch! Speak, will you?"

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"Take care! you're shaking my arm. Here's my doublet all stained with wine now. What the deuce! You'll have to give me another."

"What have you heard?" repeated the barber in a threatening voice, raising his closed fist on Chaudoreille, while with the other hand he shook him so briskly by the arm that a great part of the wine covered the jaws and neck of the chevalier.

"Nothing, nothing, I swear to you," murmured the latter, lowering his eyes, so as to avoid the barber's gaze. "I only said to you that this wine has a fine bouquet, and that if you wished to give me some bottles to keep I should carefully guard it from all eyes. I believe that's what I was saying; for, in truth, you've turned me upside down with your irritable conduct, and I don't know what I'm saying."

Touquet loosened his hold of Chaudoreille's arm, as if ashamed of his hasty movements, and, resuming his calmer tone, seated himself near the latter.

"There are some things I wish to keep secret — not that they're of any great importance; and, for the matter of that, I don't think that you will ever allow yourself to prate about my affairs; you are too well aware that my dagger would at once deprive you of the organ of which you made such use."

"What the deuce do you suppose I could blab about you?" said Chaudoreille, drying his face

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and his clothing with his little silk handkerchief, and pinching his lips, as if doubting whether Touquet had not already cut out his tongue. "You never tell me anything about your business, and I'm not a man to invent the slightest untruth."

"I've told you what all the world knows,—that I have sheltered Blanche since she had been left an orphan at my house, and that I know no more than anyone else about her father or her family. She is now grown up and pretty. Lovers will begin to come; that's what vexes me. They'll seek to learn everything about this young girl, and assuredly they won't know more about it than I am telling you. The one who was singing just now is known to me; he came into my shop this morning, and stayed two hours, in the hope that Blanche would appear. Do you hear me, Chaudoreille?"

"I hear you—if you wish me to," said the chevalier, continuing to rub his doublet; "for I don't know if I should or if I should not hear you. That shall be as you wish."

"I wish you weren't quite so foolish," said the barber, glancing scornfully at his neighbor.

"No words of double meaning," answered Chaudoreille; "you know I don't like them. This cursed wine stains, and for the moment I don't know where to get another doublet."

"He's a mere child, a scholar, who has not yet a beard on his chin," said the barber after a mo-

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ment's silence, which was only interrupted by the rubbing of the handkerchief on the spots impregnated by wine. "He shows the small experience he has had in love intrigues by coming to sing before my door — in order to let me know who was there. The poor boy has much need of a lesson."

"He certainly is not first-rate at the guitar."

"I don't believe that he can be known to Blanche. No — but that romance he was singing, — it's precisely the same as the one she mentioned to me, —

My darling is all to me."

"That doesn't equal —

Thou hast lost thy fond dove too.

Zounds! what a difference in the melody!"

"No, Blanche is candor itself; she would not have spoken to me of that romance had she known the young man. Why the devil haven't you taught her something else besides that old rubbish of Louis the Twelfth's time? If you had taught her to sing something pretty she would not have been enraptured at the first romance sung by wandering minstrels."

"What do you say? Are you talking to me?" said Chaudoreille, raising his head.

"Of course I am, since you call yourself a professor of singing."

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"My dear Touquet, listen well to what I am going to say: I don't tease you about your method of shaving beards, and don't you meddle with my way of teaching music. Each one to his own trade. You know the proverb. I teach my pupils nothing but masterpieces, and I'm not going to cram their heads with the little gurglings of those miserable clowns who travel from Naples here singing the same roulade."

"It's vexatious, then, that the young girls prefer these roulades to your masterpieces. You gave Blanche a music lesson this morning, and she tells me that you have wearied her with your villanelle."

"Had anyone but you told me that?" cried Chaudoreille, rising in vexation. "I should have attributed it to jealousy. But it's getting late; it's been a tiring day, and I must go to rest. If, however, you wish me to remain here for fear the singers should return, I will sacrifice my repose."

"No, no; it's unnecessary," said the barber, smiling. "They won't come back; go to bed."

"You have no need of my services tomorrow evening, then?"

"No — however, if you like to be walking on the Pont de la Tournelle at the hour agreed on, you could at any rate serve as a spy for us."

"Sufficient," said Chaudoreille, pulling his hat over his eyes; "you can count on me in life and in death; I shall be at the rendezvous at the exact hour, and Rolande shall be sharp. Good-by!"

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So saying the chevalier passed through the passageway into the alley and opened the door of the house. He thrust his head out into the street, and, after glancing cautiously to the right and left, went on his way like a stag who hears the sound of the chase.

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CHAPTER IX

The Closet. The Abduction

As everything coheres, everything is connected in this lower world, there is no chance; but there are many rebounds which transmit from one to another events, effects, for which we bless or curse fate, — as they are fortunate or unfortunate, — instead of tracing them to their original causes, from which, in truth, we are sometimes removed so far as to have no cognizance of them.

Thus it came to pass that our young Urbain had blessed chance on perceiving that the light was still burning in Blanche's room; but if the young girl had not gone to rest it was not by chance, but because Marguerite could not decide to go up to bed in her new room before knowing where the little door in the back of her alcove led.

Now if the garrulous old maidservant had not confessed to her master that she had witnessed his nightly vigils, the latter would not have made her change her lodging; and the fear which induced him to do so was due to other causes still more remote; thus, by a series of events, Marguerite's gossip had led to Blanche's hearing Urbain's sweet and

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tender voice sing the romance which had so enchanted her in the morning.

"Yes, mademoiselle," said the old woman, some moments before the young lover began to sing, "I know I should die of fright if I should have to sleep alone in that horrid room, formerly inhabited by a magician, without knowing where that little door leads to — perhaps into that Odoard's laboratory. Who knows whether he isn't still there? These sorcerers are sometimes shut up by themselves for half a century, searching for secrets which will enable them to give human kind into the hands of the devil. I am sure that M. Touquet, who is very indifferent in regard to everything pertaining to sorcerers, has not once been into that room. Let me pass the night in your room, my child; tomorrow, when it's daylight, we'll go together and open that door, since the Chevalier Chaudoreille wasn't polite enough to do so. I can pass the night in this easy chair; I shall be much better here than upstairs, and I can tell you some interesting stories before you go to sleep."

Blanche could not refuse Marguerite what she asked as a favor; the old woman was relating her third story of sorcery, and the young girl, who felt that her eyes were growing heavy, was about to go to bed, when the sounds of a guitar were heard.

Blanche listened, and made a sign to Marguerite

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to be silent, and soon recognized with delight the air which she was desirous of learning. There is something sweeter, more seductive, in music thus heard in the middle of the night; it finds its way more quickly to the heart. Urbain's voice was flexible and melodious. Blanche, transported, remained motionless, as though she feared by a single movement to lose a sound, while Marguerite, gaping with astonishment, looked at the engaging child without appearing greatly enchanted with the music. But Marguerite was more than sixty years old, and music had not the same effect upon her as upon Blanche; the sounds reached no farther than her ears, while they vibrated deliciously in the depths of the heart of sixteen.

Very soon, however, the noise which they heard in the street put an end to Blanche's happiness; she recognized the barber's voice, and the threats which he pronounced made her tremble, as well as Marguerite, who cried immediately, —

"Go to bed! go to bed quickly, my child, and extinguish the light; if M. Touquet sees that we are still awake, if he should find me in here — O holy blessed Virgin! I shall be lost."

"But why is he so angry?" said Blanche. "Is singing in the streets in the evenings forbidden? I was so pleased to hear that romance. What harm was the young man doing? — for it was a young man who was singing — was it not, dear nurse? It was not the voice of an old man, and,

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oh, how well he sang! I have never heard such a pretty voice; it had a singular effect on me; it made my heart beat with pleasure — didn't it yours, Marguerite?"

Marguerite, whose heart was beating only with fear, contented herself with repeating, "Go to bed quickly, put out the lamp, and above all don't say tomorrow that you heard the singing; that would prove that you were not yet asleep, and M. Touquet wishes everyone to go to sleep as soon as they go to bed."

Since it was necessary to yield to the insistence of the old servant, Blanche went to bed, but she did not go to sleep; the young singer's voice still seemed to ring in her ears, and on hearing the least sound in the street she imagined that it was the musician again. As to Marguerite, after putting out the lamp, she extended herself in an armchair near the fire and fell asleep, murmuring a prayer to drive away evil spirits.

The morning after this night, so fertile with events, Blanche arose early. She was pensive, preoccupied, still dreaming of the young singer's voice; she felt new desires, and sighed as she glanced toward the street. Marguerite ran to her work, saying to Blanche, —

"When monsieur is most busily engaged with his customers, we'll go up together into my room; but, my child, above all don't say anything about the music."

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Blanche promised her, saying, "Why should he be angry because somebody came to sing such a pretty air under our windows?"

The barber said nothing to the young girl about the adventure of the night; he contented himself with observing Blanche, and the lovely child, remembering the threats which she had overheard him utter against the singer, had no desire to chat; she hastened to return to her chamber, where Marguerite was not long in coming to rejoin her.

"Now is the time," said the old servant; "monsieur has a good many people to shave. Come, my child; come up with me, and above all don't be frightened; I have taken every precaution necessary to drive away the goblins."

"Frightened!" said Blanche, because she saw that Marguerite was trembling. "No, dear nurse, no; I assure you that I'm not thinking of your secret door at all."

Thus saying, Blanche darted lightly up the stairs, while Marguerite followed her more slowly, saying, "Happy age when one has no fear of magicians, because one does not understand all their wickedness, — it is true that she has a talisman."

When they reached the room, Blanche entered quickly, while the old woman made a genuflexion and invoked her patron saint, after which she decided also to go into her new room, throwing anxious glances about her. Blanche had run into

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the alcove and already drawn the bed into the middle of the room.

"Wait a moment; don't be so imprudent," cried Marguerite to her. "Is it necessary to do things so quickly?"

"But, dear nurse, the sooner we open that door, the sooner you'll be reassured."

"Reassured! that's what I wish. Have you your talisman, my darling?"

"Of course I have. Didn't you sew it yourself inside my corsets?"

"That's true."

"I don't see the door you were talking about."

"It is so well encased in the woodwork."

"Ah, here it is!"

"Wait a moment, mademoiselle, while I throw some holy water before it."

"But there's no key; how can we open it?"

"Well, we must try. I have several keys that I have picked up while cleaning the house, perhaps one of those will open it."

Marguerite advanced tremblingly towards the end of the alcove. She drew from her pocket half a dozen rusty keys of different sizes, and was about to try one of them, but her hand shook and she could not find the keyhole. Blanche seized one key and tried it unsuccessfully, then a second; but at the third the young girl uttered a cry of joy, for the key turned, and Marguerite crossed herself, murmuring, —

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"O my God, the door is opening!"

In fact, the door yielded to Blanche's effort and opened, creaking and groaning on its hinges, and the two women beheld a square closet; but, as it received no light except from the little door that opened into it, and as that door led into a dark alcove, one may conceive that there was little daylight there. Blanche remained on the doorsill and Marguerite recoiled a few steps, saying, —

"See now, my child; I was right in thinking that that door led somewhere. Oh, this is as dark as a cave."

"Let us go in here, nurse."

"But not without a light, I hope. Wait; I will go and light my lamp. I don't know that it is prudent of us to enter this closet."

"But, Marguerite, you see very well that there is nobody here."

"I can see nothing except darkness. Wait; take the lamp, and you go first, my darling; you have your talisman; nothing will happen to you."

Blanche entered first; she seemed more curious than alarmed, while the old woman could scarcely persuade herself to follow. The closet was six feet square, and held nothing but two big empty chests placed on the floor, which time had covered with dust and spiders' webs.

"Well now, my dear nurse," said Blanche, smiling, "where are the sorcerers? I don't see anything frightful here."

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"In fact," answered Marguerite, glancing all about her; "there's nothing but four walls, no other door, and these two chests are empty. I'm sure that no one has disturbed this place for half a century. No matter; I swear to you that I shall not come back here again. I don't know why I feel so uneasy here. How the floor creaks under our feet!"

"It's because no one has walked here for a long time; this house is old."

"Come, my dear child, let us leave this closet; I shall shut the door and double-lock it, and I shan't open it again while I stay in this room."

Thus saying, Marguerite pushed Blanche before her, then closed the little door and double-locked it, murmuring between her teeth,

"Alas! if some sorcerer should wish to open the door that lock would not resist him; but every night I shall cross my shovel and tongs before it."

This visit terminated, Blanche went down, humming to herself the romance of the evening before, and Marguerite returned to her work.

The barber had ordered dinner early; and at six o'clock in the evening he left the house, repeating to Marguerite:

"Redouble your watchfulness, do not allow any man to go near Blanche without my permission, and inform me if you hear anyone singing in the street."

The old woman promised to obey. Touquet

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wrapped his mantle about him and left to execute the marquis' plan. As he was accustomed to conduct similar intrigues, he knew where to procure everything that was necessary; and at a quarter to eight he was on the Pont de la Tournelle, while about a hundred feet from him two men awaited his orders near a travelling-chaise drawn by two horses.

For a long time Chaudoreille had been walking on the bridge. Fearing to miss the rendezvous, given for eight o'clock, he had arrived at six; burying his head between his shoulders and hiding his chin under his little mantle, he tried to give himself the air of a conspirator. With his left hand on Rolande's handle and the other holding his mantle, he walked sometimes slowly and sometimes with a precipitant step; and every time that anyone passed him he did not fail to murmur, in such a manner as to be heard, —

"How late she is in coming! What can keep her? I am burning! I am bursting! I shall die with impatience."

As soon as he saw Touquet he ran to him and pulled the edge of his mantle; then, looking to see if anybody was passing, he said to him in a mysterious tone, —

"Here I am."

"Well, hang it, I see you!" said the barber, shrugging his shoulders; "but I'd much rather see the little one."

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"She hasn't appeared yet, I can answer for that. I've looked in every woman's face."

"It's not eight o'clock; let us wait."

"Be easy; I'll go and put myself in ambuscade and examine all the feminine visages."

"Take care they don't slap you; that would draw a crowd, and wouldn't please me."

"Slap me! They're more likely to kiss me, I should say; but I'll make a grimace, so as not to tempt them."

And Chaudoreille, drawing his hat down over his eyes, departed, taking as long steps as his little legs would permit.

In about three minutes Chaudoreille returned to say to the barber, —

"There's a woman who has just come along by the Pont Marie, and who is going to pass over this bridge."

"Indeed! Is she the one we are waiting for? You ought to know, if you've peered into her face."

"No; I wasn't able to do that this time, because she was giving her arm to a man, and he would have been frightened."

"If she's with a man it's not our young girl; one doesn't bring witnesses to a lovers' meeting."

"That's correct," said Chaudoreille, and he started off again.

Some minutes later he returned to Touquet, crying, —

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"Here's another one who is coming along this way; but this one is alone, I am sure of that."

"Is it our beauty?"

"No, it is not she."

"You idiot! what did you come and tell me for?"

"So that you should not make a mistake; I thought it was my duty to avert that."

"Chaudoreille, do me the pleasure of remaining still. I know very well how to recognize her whom I came to meet without your help; although I haven't yet seen her, I am certain that I shan't make a mistake; but, hang it! if she doesn't come to this meeting, I shall send you to drink the water under the bridge, to teach you to do your errands better."

Chaudoreille had not heard the barber's last words; he was already far away, but he returned precipitately, looking scared.

"What is it now?" said Touquet.

"A patrol of the watch, which I can see coming, and which is going to pass by us."

"Well, what of that? What has the watch to do with us? It's not forbidden to walk on the bridge, and, even if they should see us abduct a young girl I can answer for it they'll hardly trouble themselves about that."

"Haven't we a rather suspicious look?"

"You make me ashamed of you."

"I shall pretend to be laughing, to allay their suspicions."

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"Wait, perhaps this will give you more courage."

So saying the barber kicked Chaudoreille; but the latter received it singing, contenting himself by rubbing the part attacked while executing his trills, because at that moment the watch was passing them. When the patrol had departed he breathed more freely, and cried, —

"They have taken us for simple troubadours."

"They should have taken you for a fool. A plague on all poltroons! They are good for nothing except to spoil everything."

"I'm not going to get angry at a matter which doesn't concern me; but on great occasions it seems to me that stratagem is often better than valor."

The barber had begun to be impatient, when a young woman came on to the bridge, walking slowly and glancing from time to time about her. Chaudoreille had not perceived her, because he was in ambuscade at the side of the Rue des Deux-Ponts.

Touquet approached the unknown, looked at her and saw that this really was the young girl whom the marquis had depicted; for her part, the damsel looked attentively at the barber, and seemed to wait for him to address her in words.

"Are you not the Signora Julia?" said the barber in a bass voice, approaching the young girl.

"And you the barber Touquet?" answered she, lifting to him her animated black eyes.

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The barber was surprised at hearing himself named by a person to whom he believed himself unknown, but, after having considered the young girl anew, he resumed, —

"Since you know me, you should also know that the Marquis de Villebelle has sent me to you."

"The marquis is rather ungallant," answered Julia, "in not coming himself to a first meeting."

"These great noblemen are not the masters of their time; besides, the marquis has no desire to converse with you about his love on this bridge."

"Preferring, no doubt, his little house of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine?"

"It seems to me, signora, that you are very well acquainted with everything that concerns the marquis; after that I have nothing more to tell you, except that a carriage is waiting a hundred feet from here."

"Very well, let us go."

"The deuce!" said the barber to himself, offering his arm to Julia, that he might conduct her to the coach; "here is a young girl who doesn't make a bit of fuss about allowing herself to be abducted. But I must confess that there's something in her voice and manners very decided and piquant, which astonishes as well as pleases."

They had reached the carriage when Chaudoreille's voice was heard; he ran after the barber, crying, —

"There's a woman coming by the side of the

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Porte de la Tournelle; it is our little one; I recognized her walk."

Saying these words, Chaudoreille perceived that the barber was conducting a person to whom he had given his arm.

"How is this? What does this mean? Must I believe my eyes?" cried the chevalier. "That's our beauty, and what the deuce way did she come? No matter; we've got her; that's the essential thing. I will protect your walk."

Chaudoreille then drew his sword, and, giving no ear to the barber, who bade him depart, ran up to the carriage, crying to the two men who were near, —

"My friends, here they are. Be adroit, be courageous. By jingo! she must enter your vehicle, willingly or by force."

Somebody opened the door, and Chaudoreille was a little surprised at seeing the young person trip first into the carriage. He was about to do the same, and seat himself near her, when Touquet, taking him by the breeches, dropped him on all-fours on the pavement, and, following Julia into the carriage, said to the coachman, —

"Go on!"

"What the deuce! he's going to abduct her without me," said Chaudoreille, picking himself up. "No, not by all the devils! It shall not be said that I did not finish this adventure; besides, they've only given me something on account, and

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I should like to be settled with before the marquis gets tired of the little one."

Chaudoreille immediately darted after the carriage; accustomed to running, he caught up with it, mounted behind, and allowed himself to be drawn at a great gallop, taking care to hold tightly to the tassels, which served to support him.

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CHAPTER X

The Little House. A New Game

The carriage bearing the barber and Julia had soon passed the Porte Saint-Antoine, which at that period had not attained the dignity of the Faubourg, but was in a neighborhood where the road is cut by the boulevards, and which served frequently, as did all thinly inhabited districts at the time of which we are writing, for a meeting-place for robbers, vagabonds, pages, lackeys and cut-purses.

The marquis' little house was situated near the Vallée de Fécamp, which today is replaced by a street bearing the same name, and making the continuation of the Rue de la Planchette. Crossing this unlighted place of evil fame in the middle of the night was, at that time, to expose one's self to as much danger as though passing through the forest of Bondy. However, many noblemen had chosen this quarter for the theatre of their gallantries. They possessed small houses there, their ordinary meeting-places in their love intrigues, and often went out incognito, but always well armed.

The carriage stopped before an enclosing wall;

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Chaudoreille looked about him on all sides. The house was isolated, and the wall which enclosed the garden appeared unbroken, but Touquet had already alighted from the carriage; he approached a small door which the chevalier had not perceived, and rang a bell. Before any one could come to open it Chaudoreille had left the place which he had occupied, and had offered his hand to Julia to assist her in alighting from the carriage.

The door was immediately opened by a man servant, who appeared holding a lantern in his hand, and, merely glancing at the carriage and at the damsel who was getting out of it, he contented himself with smiling and making a low bow to the barber.

"Your master has warned you that we were coming?" said Touquet to this person in a low voice.

"Yes, monsieur," answered the servant, "I am waiting for you."

Here the barber, upon turning around to introduce Julia to the lackey perceived for the first time the redoubtable Chaudoreille, who stood bolt upright before the door with his sword in his hand, as though he were a sentinel on guard. The barber shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and, after handing Julia in, he unceremoniously dragged the chevalier by his mantle, and made him also pass into the garden, saying,—

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"Since you have followed us here, it is necessary that you should do something for us."

"That is my duty, by jingo," responded the chevalier, while Touquet reclosed the garden gate, after having said to the two men who were near the coach, —

"Wait for me."

They followed along a tiled passageway which led to the house. The garden was gloomy. The servant who carried the lantern walked in front, and Chaudoreille, who found himself the last, glanced from time to time anxiously from right to left; he wished to open the conversation, and had already exclaimed, "This garden appears to be very large," when the barber turned and ordered him to keep silent. To indemnify himself for this forced silence, Chaudoreille, who was still holding Rolande naked in his hand, struck every tree that he met.

They arrived at the house and entered a vestibule, at the end of which was a staircase, while to the right and the left doors led to the apartments on the ground floor.

Julia, who had followed her conductors without speaking, appeared to examine attentively everything that presented itself to her. Chaudoreille, finding himself near the man with the lantern, uttered a cry of surprise, saying, —

"Why, what the deuce! I can't be mistaken. It is Marcel, one of my old friends. Don't you

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know me? I am Chaudoreille; we spent six months in prison together, but it was for a mere trifle. I left it as white as snow."

"Be silent, idiots," cried the barber; "you can make your greetings a little later. Where is madame's apartment?"

"On the first floor," answered Marcel, putting his hand in Chaudoreille's, who shook it as if he had found his best friend.

"Lead us," said Touquet, "and you remain here."

The latter part of this order was addressed to the chevalier and it did not afford him much pleasure; but he was forced to obey. However, when Chaudoreille perceived that there was no light in the vestibule where they left him, and where he found himself in the most complete obscurity, he ascended several steps of the stairs, crying in a quivering voice, —

"Don't leave me alone here. The night is chilly and I am afraid of taking cold."

Marcel led Julia and the barber and, after making them pass through several rooms, lighted only by his lantern, opened a door, saying, —

"Here is the room in which madame can rest herself."

Julia could not restrain an exclamation of surprise, and the barber himself was lost in admiration. The room which they had entered was lighted by a lustre hung from the ceiling, and the

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light of many wax candles permitted one to admire the luxury with which this place was decorated. Delightful paintings of seductive and voluptuous figures ornamented the wainscot. The furniture was upholstered in light blue, where silk and silver were blended with art. There were Venetian glasses, Persian carpets, candelabras in which perfumes were burning, while natural flowers were disposed elsewhere, in pyramids, in crystal vases. The whole combination tended to make a sojourn in this place a delight, for here was united everything that would intoxicate the senses and inspire pleasure.

Julia and the barber had entered the lighted room; Marcel remained respectfully at the door and seemed to wait some orders.

"This place is delightful," said Julia; "but I do not see the marquis."

"You will see him soon, madame," answered Touquet; "in an hour he will be here. While awaiting him you can ask for everything that is agreeable to you. Your desires will be accomplished immediately. This bell communicates with the floor below. Is not that so, Marcel?"

"Yes, monsieur, and if madame would like to take something, I have prepared a collation in the little neighboring room."

Marcel indicated a door hidden by a mirror. The barber pushed it and they saw a second room, smaller but equally well lighted, and decorated

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with as much magnificence, only the furniture and the hangings were of poppy-colored velvet, ornamented with fringes of gold, while light blue and silver were the only colors in the first.

"He did not deceive me," said Touquet to himself, glancing into the second room, "when he said that he had made an enchanting bower of this house. What luxury! What magnificence! How much money he must have spent to do all this! And yet he is not happy."

Julia had thrown herself on a lounge and appeared thoughtful. The barber bowed to her, and, making a sign to Marcel, left the apartment with him.

Marcel was a bachelor of twenty-eight or thirty years, short, fat and cheerful; obedient and exact as an Oriental, but endowed with very little genius and incapable of conducting the merest intrigue. The marquis, to whom more adroit, more active, more enterprising people were necessary, but who appreciated Marcel's faithfulness, had found, in order to keep him, no better means of employing him than to make him the keeper of this house. There his functions were limited to a passive obedience to the orders which he received; but he was a stranger to all the intrigues of which this abode was the theatre, and ignored sometimes the correct name of the person who during a short period was reigning sovereign in the little house. This troubled him little, and his indifference was

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MARCEL.

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY G. A. WILLIAMS.

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... magnificence, only the furniture ... were ... colored velvet, ... gold, while ... tors in the ...

... me," ... the second room, ... made an ... of ... luxury! ... he is ..."

Marcel was a ... twe... years, short, fat a... ful; ... and as an Oriental, but ... oved ... little and incapable of ... est ... The marquis, ...

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a guarantee of his discretion, a quality which in his employ was very necessary.

"You know Chaudoreille?" said the barber to Marcel, following him into the passageway which led to the staircase.

"Yes, monsieur," answered the valet, "I knew him formerly in a rather unfortunate affair, since I had to pass six months in prison, and God knows if I was guilty. It is in the neighborhood of seven years ago, and I was not then in the marquis' service. I was drinking in an inn, and Chaudoreille was there also; he was playing at piquet with two other cavaliers, and they invited me to make one of their party. I accepted the invitation. I played and I lost. He took my place, put down some crowns for me, saying that we should be partners, and played with surprising good fortune. I was delighted to see him win, but our adversaries pretended that he cheated. Then they disputed, and in place of paying us wanted to fight us so badly that they made a great noise. The sergeants of the watch arrived with their archers and led us to prison,—Chaudoreille and me. That was how we made acquaintance; but since that time I have lost the taste for playing. I wouldn't touch a card now."

"All the better for you. I advise you to keep that resolution."

The barber and Marcel then went down the stairs which led into the vestibule, when cries of

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"Thief!" "Beware!" "Murder!" came to their ears. The cries came from the garden, and Touquet recognized the chevalier's voice.

"What the devil is he at now?" said the barber, hurrying his steps, while Marcel followed him, repeating, —

"Thieves! That is singular. However, the doors are close shut, and the walls of the garden are ten feet high."

Tired of being without light in the vestibule, Chaudoreille had returned into the garden, where, since the moon was nearly hidden by clouds, one could see but a little way from him. The chevalier was singing a virelay which he accompanied by striking Rolande against the branches, then barren of foliage. All of a sudden, at the entrance to some shrubbery, a large white face appeared opposite Chaudoreille, who stopped and cried, in a faltering voice, —

"Who goes there?"

Nobody answered him, and he judged it prudent in place of repeating his question to regain the house. In his alarm he mistook the way, and at a turn in the alley perceived before him another personage, who held a club in his hand, with which he seemed disposed to strike him. It was then that Chaudoreille, who felt his strength for flight fail him, made the garden echo with his cries. Guided by his voice, the barber and Marcel were soon near him.

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"What is the matter? Wherefore this noise?" said Touquet.

"Don't you see that wretch who is waiting for me down there to slay me, while his accomplice is hidden in another bush?"

The barber turned to look in the direction which Chaudoreille designated with his hand. Marcel did likewise, holding the lantern before him. Soon the latter burst into a shout of laughter, and the barber cried, —

"I was sure that this clown would commit some foolishness."

"Why foolishness? Zounds! Why did not these people answer me when I cried to them, 'Who goes there?'"

"That would be very difficult for them," said Marcel. "The one that you perceive over there is Hercules killing the Lernean hydra, and the other is probably Mercury or Mars. Perhaps it was even a Venus which frightened you."

"Frightened me? Oh, no. By jingo, I wasn't frightened; but they should warn people when they have an Olympus in their garden. In any case, if it is Mercury he can flatter himself that he has received five or six strokes from the flat of this sword, and they weren't given by a dead hand."

"And if this young girl heard your cries, wretch," said the barber directing his steps towards the little door.

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"I do not think she could," said Marcel, "the room she occupies looks out on the other side of the garden."

The barber then opened the door by which they had entered.

"Remain with Marcel," said he to Chaudoreille. "The marquis will soon be here. If he has any orders for me you will come and communicate them to me immediately, but before monseigneur you must be mute. If the least word escapes you before him, if you commit a single awkwardness, remember I shall take your punishment upon myself."

So saying, Touquet sprang into the carriage, which left immediately. Chaudoreille was pleased to remain, thinking that he would now see the marquis and could find a way to prove his intelligence to him. He took Marcel's arm, remembering that the latter had a very sweet disposition and was easily led, and felicitated himself on the chance which had led to their meeting. The barber alighted when some steps distant from his house. He paid the people, sent away the carriage and hastened to enter, for the marquis would be there towards ten o'clock and it was not far from that now. Marguerite opened the door to her master, who addressed a few ordinary questions to her on the subject of Blanche. The old servant swore to her master that no man had spoken to the young girl. Touquet sent Marguerite away. He wished

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to wait for the marquis alone. Ten o'clock had sounded some time ago and the barber, who awaited congratulations and a new recompense, was beginning to be astonished at the lack of haste on the part of the marquis when, at last, somebody knocked at the street door and the great nobleman entered the barber's house.

"Hang it, my poor Touquet, I barely missed forgetting our rendezvous," said the marquis, throwing himself on a seat.

"What, monseigneur, you forget a love affair? That astonishes me, I confess."

"You should, however, be able to understand it better than another. Why should not one end by tiring of that which he does every day? I am utterly blasé in regard to these things. I had, God forgive me, totally forgotten the little one. I was at the Hôtel de Bourgogne with Chavagnac, Montheil and some other of my friends. Turlupin, Gauthier-Garguille and Gros-Guillaume very much diverted us. The rascals are full of jokes; they are quite the fashion. Everybody is running to see them. They have created a furore, above all, since they represented a comical scene at the cardinal's palace, and since Richelieu has permitted them to play at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, despite the protests of the comedians. On leaving there we went into an inn; we were in the mood for laughter; we fought with some little shopkeepers who disputed the possession of a table with us.

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They shouted like the devil; the sergeants of the watch came, but we mentioned our names in a low tone and the king's archers helped us to put the rabble out of the place. We remained masters of the field of battle; it couldn't end otherwise. I never laughed so much. Chavagnac actually wished to eat an omelette off the face of a fat draper; the poor devil made some horrible grimaces in his fright; it was really very comical; he escaped by swallowing twelve glasses of brandy one after the other; afterwards we made him roll from the first story to the groundfloor. Finally, my dear fellow, you can conceive that with all this the little nut-brown maid went entirely out of my head, but just then somebody mentioned a master knave; I thought of you and that recalled our rendezvous. Well, now, to come to the point, where do we stand?"

"Monseigneur, I have fulfilled your desires, and for the past hour the young girl has been at your little house."

"You don't say so! What! Is the affair really terminated thus quickly. It doesn't seem as though mademoiselle had made many scruples."

"I must confess, monsieur, that she got into the carriage with a very good grace."

"A little resistance would have pleased me better; it's cruel that one can have immediately all that one desires. These young girls are so impressed when one speaks to them of a great noble-

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man. I'm almost sorry I have entangled myself with this one, for the devil carry me away if I'm in love with her the least bit in the world. For very little I'd have you take her back to the place you took her from. What d'you say, Touquet; that would be droll, wouldn't it?"

The barber, piqued at the little pleasure evinced by the marquis at his successful abduction of the young girl, answered coldly, —

"I see that monseigneur has almost entirely forgotten the one who charmed him two days ago; if he could remember her he would not show so much indifference in her possession."

"What, is she really so beautiful? Do you think she is capable of engaging my affection for any length of time?"

"I don't know, monsieur, whether she will have that good fortune; but I have seen many courtesans in the highest vogue who did not equal that young Italian."

"Is she an Italian?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"All the better; that alters the case a little."

"Her name is Julia; her face, while not regularly beautiful, has a nameless something that is very piquant and seductive; and there is in her voice, in her manner, in everything about her, something that denotes force and originality. In short, she is not a languorous beauty, such as one most often sees."

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"Do you know, you pique my curiosity; come, tomorrow, we'll admire all this."

"Tomorrow! What monsieur, and the young girl is awaiting you with impatience?"

"We must let her sigh until then; I have promised to rejoin my friends and finish the night with them. With people of honor one does not break his word; the beautiful Julia must be patient."

"I also left one of my men with Marcel, in case monsieur le marquis should have any further orders to send me. I hope he'll be useful, since Marcel can't leave the house."

"Oh, very well, your man can wait; one can give him a few pistoles more. By the way, I must pay you. Wait! Here's some gold I won at lansquenet this morning. But time's passing, I wager those rascals are getting impatient; I must run and rejoin them. We shall have a delightful night; we are in just the vein for diversion. We'll make some notches in the good citizens of Paris, we'll flog the watch, we'll stop chair porters, and I won't answer for it that we don't steal some mantles on the Pont-Neuf."

The marquis hastily departed and the barber closed his door, saying, —

"After all, he may do as he pleases now, since I have been paid."

While this interview was taking place in the Rue des Bourdonnaise, the young girl whom they

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had left in the luxurious boudoir, arose from the lounge as soon as those who brought her had departed. She approached a mirror which reflected the whole figure; one glance sufficed to distract and give her occupation. Julia arranged her hair, passing her fingers through it and re-formed its ringlets; she examined herself, she smiled; Julia was a coquette; so to some extent is every woman, they say. To judge whether she be more or less so it is only necessary to count the minutes that she passes before her mirror; ordinarily she is not the prettiest who there looks at herself longest.

At last Julia appeared satisfied with herself; she left the mirror and ran about the boudoir and into the neighboring room, admiring everything which she had pretended to view with indifference as long as anyone could see her. She stopped before an alabaster clock which bore a little love. The hand pointed nearly to eleven o'clock. Julia sighed and frowned, and threw herself into an easy chair, murmuring, —

"He does not come."

While the young girl sighingly regarded the clock, Chaudoreille asked Marcel to lead him to the dining-room, saying that he was dying of hunger and that since the morning he had been running in the service of monsieur le marquis. Marcel hastened to offer his guest a good supper, to which the chevalier did full honor. While eating, Chaudoreille recounted his exploits to his old

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friend, and as Marcel listened to everything in good faith, our Gascon, delighted at finding someone who had faith in his prowess, had already killed fifteen rivals and delivered eight victims of tyranny, before he had begun a second helping.

"Old fellow," said Marcel, opening his eyes wide, and helping himself to drink, "it seems to me that you have a hot head."

"Hot? By jingo, say boiling; say volcanic. It is not my fault, but I can't be moderate. I am a rake of honor, a real devil; that is the word."

"But why did you call for help against the statues in the garden?"

"Listen, my dear Marcel: At first I could not see that they were statues, and when one is brave one believes that one sees robbers everywhere; you don't understand that, because you are cool-blooded, and, besides that, you can very well understand that I could not allow myself to kill anybody in the Marquis de Villebelle's house without having asked permission."

"Hush, no one names the marquis here."

"Ah, I understand. That is correct. It is necessary to have some mystery. Hang it! This is the abode of love incognito. Say, Marcel, have you been living long in this house?"

"Nearly five years."

"You must have seen some beauties."

"I have seen nothing, for here it is necessary to see and not to see."

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"I understand very well. What the deuce do you take me for, a caitiff? That is all right. You have a golden place. The marquis is generous, is he not?"

"Yes."

"You earn at least twenty pistoles a year."

"Double that."

"Fortunate rascal. When I say rascal, you are the most perfectly honest man that I know. I even believe that you are the only one that I know. Good old Marcel! I am very much pleased to have met you again. I have looked for you all over, in the gambling houses and in the gambling hells even."

"Oh, I have not played for a long time."

"Nonsense, you are joking."

"No, since our adventure I have lost my taste for playing. To go to prison when one is innocent is very disagreeable."

"Oh, well, old fellow, there are a good many thieves who don't go and that makes the balance correct. As for me, I confess that I still play. It amuses me. Besides, it is the pleasure of a great nobleman, and there is nothing more noble than to play and lose right down to your boots."

"Since I am only a valet I have no need of following that fashion."

"You are wrong. It is always necessary to follow the great. You played a very strong game of piquet."

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"Me? Oh, on the contrary, I am a very weak player."

"Pure modesty. Hang it! I wish I could take a lesson from you. We have had our supper. While waiting for your master to come, let us play a game to pass the time."

"That will be very difficult, for we have no cards here. When by chance I have found some upstairs which have been left by my master and his friends I have burned or sold them."

"That is very awkward; and I, who have nearly always a pack in my pocket, necessarily left mine at home."

"Wait, Chaudoreille! taste this liqueur. That will be much better than playing."

Thus saying, Marcel filled two glasses with crême de vanille and placed one before his comrade.

"Yes, I am very fond of liqueur," said Chaudoreille. "This has an exquisite perfume. We could have drunk and played at the same time."

"But I tell you that I have not any cards."

"You have some dice, at least."

"No more than I have cards."

"Mercy! Some dominoes?"

"Nothing to play with, I tell you."

"Devil stifle you! How shall we pass the time without playing? Oh, what a delightful idea! I have thought of a very agreeable little game which you will easily understand. You have before you

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a full glass of liqueur and I have the same. They are of equal size; I will play you a crown on the first fly."

"What fly?" said Marcel.

"Listen now. There are a good many flies in this room, and he whose glass is first visited by one of them will win a crown from the other. Is it agreed?"

"That is a droll game, but I like it well enough."

"In that case let's shake hands on it. That settled, attend to our play."

Chaudoreille no longer budged. With his eyes fixed attentively on his own glass and that of his adversary, he waited impatiently for a fly to come and taste the sweet liqueur. Neither of them made a movement, for fear of frightening the winged insects. They had already remained motionless for five minutes before their glasses when Marcel sneezed.

"The devil confound you?" cried Chaudoreille. "You drove away the most beautiful fly which was approaching my glass. She was just going in."

"Is it my fault if I feel a desire to sneeze?"

"It is a trick, my dear fellow, and, in all conscience, you should lose the game.

"You are joking, no doubt."

"Well I will pass over the sneeze, but if you begin again that will count. Wait! The flies are coming."

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They observed silence anew. From time to time Chaudoreille looked into the air and seemed to implore the flies to come and taste his liqueur. At last, after some minutes of waiting, a fly sipped from Marcel's glass.

"I have won," cried the latter.

"One moment," said Chaudoreille, spitefully stamping his foot. "Leave me to judge of this affair."

"It seems to me that there is nothing equivocal about it. The fly is still in my glass."

"But I am anxious to know if it is really a fly. I am not going to lose a crown for a pig in a poke."

Chaudoreille arose and advanced his head, that he might look more closely into the glass which was before Marcel, but no sooner had he by this movement approached his host than he cried, carrying his hand to his nose,—

"The game is off. There is nothing more to be done."

"This is to say," cried Marcel, in his turn rising from the table.

"I repeat, the game is off."

"And why?"

"Why, by jingo, because your breath is strong enough to make flies fall in their flight. After that you see the game is not equal."

"Chaudoreille, I will take the thing as a joke, and I don't care about winning your money, but

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I flatter myself that I have a breath at least as fresh as yours."

"Take the thing as a joke?" said the chevalier, putting his hand on the handle of his sword. "Do you wish to vex me? By jingo, if I had known."

"Come, come, calm yourself."

"Do you think I will suffer such injuries. By Rolande, I don't know how to hold myself."

"Will you soon be done?"

"By George! If I believed that you wish to molest me, as if I care about a crown; if I had lost a hundred I should have paid you just the same."

"That is all right. Leave all that."

The more Marcel tried to calm his comrade, the more he lost his temper and shouted, for he believed that Marcel was afraid of him and he wished to profit by his bullying; he even went so far as to draw his sword and run about the room, rolling his little eyes around him as if he would split everything in two. Marcel grew impatient, and seeing that all of his entreaties were vain decided to take a broom handle from behind the door. Putting himself on the defensive, he waited for his enemy to come and attack him, but this action suddenly calmed Chaudoreille's fury. At sight of Marcel on guard with his broom, he stopped and struck his forehead as one who has suddenly received an enlightening idea.

"Great God!" he cried, "What was I going

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to do? It was in the house of the noble Marquis de Villebelle that I allowed myself to be carried away by anger? Oh, my courage, how much trouble you give me. All is forgotten, Marcel. Come to my arms. I will forgive you."

Marcel, always a good fellow, threw aside his broom and shook hands with Chaudoreille. They returned to the table, but they played no more, and while in the room on the first floor somebody was sighing and looking at the hand of the clock, in the lower room the two comrades ended by putting themselves to sleep while sampling the fine wines and liqueurs of the marquis.

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CHAPTER XI

The Pont-Neuf. Tabarin

The ill-success of his serenade had not daunted the young Urbain; when one is really very much in love one does not lose courage for a trifle. Our lover returned to his dwelling cursing the jealous barber, for he did not doubt that jealousy was at the root of Touquet's exceedingly watchful care of the young girl; and though he was but little dismayed at the barber's threats, Urbain swore, notwithstanding them, to become known to Blanche, and to do everything in his power to make her love him. The act of swearing is in itself extremely easy of accomplishment — what oaths have been taken and broken within a half century only; but we are now speaking merely of the oaths of love, which are lighter, necessarily, than some others, and to break them is considered a pardonable offence. Urbain, who had sworn that he would see Blanche, was, however, greatly troubled to invent a way of doing so; but in love one always swears first and reflects afterwards, and in business it must be confessed there are a good many people who follow the very same course.

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On the day after the night on which he had sung, Urbain was walking in the neighborhood of the barber's, but he dared not enter the house, which he ogled sighingly, nor even, for fear of being noticed by Touquet, could he pass by the shop. It was from afar that he examined the windows; nobody could be seen at them. She seemed to be condemned to an eternal seclusion. He waited until Marguerite should leave the house. At last she opened the door of the alley; she was going to get some provisions.

Urbain did not lose sight of the old servant, but he did not dare to go into the shops with her. How could he get into conversation? One is not apt at intrigue at nineteen years of age. At last, at the moment when Marguerite was passing by him, Urbain tremblingly accosted her, —

"Madame, I should very much like — "

"I'm not a dame — I'm not married."

"Mademoiselle if I dared — "

"If you dared what?"

"To ask you — "

"Well, why don't you speak?"

"Some news of Mademoiselle Blanche."

"Mademoiselle Blanche! Oh that's what you are up to, my young dandy? Go along, go your own way; you're addressing the wrong person. If you want to talk about that dear child, speak to my master; he'll answer you, I warrant, and in the best manner."

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So saying, Marguerite left Urbain and went in, murmuring, —

"Monsieur is right, it is necessary to redouble our watchfulness that such a pretty girl may not be besieged by these worthless fellows."

"They're all bound to make me despair," said Urbain, disheartened by the unkind welcome accorded him by the old woman, "but, despite all their precautions, I shall see her, I shall speak to her." And the better to dream of at least seeing her Urbain departed from the house that held Blanche; he walked by chance and soon arrived on the Pont-Neuf.

The Pont-Neuf was then a meeting place for strangers, for schemers, for idlers, for pickpockets, and people who had newly disembarked. It was the most crowded thoroughfare of the capital; unceasingly encumbered with groups of curious people who stopped before the quacks, who were selling their universal panaceas and playing farces, mountebanks, thimbleriggers, pedlers of songs, of ironmongery, of books, of jujubes, it offered to the observer a diverting and extremely animated scene.

Tabarin, who became famous by the scenes which he played in public, and from whom our great Molière has not disdained to borrow some buffooneries, was then established on the Pont-Neuf, towards the Place Dauphine. He had succeeded the famous Signor Hieronimo who, in the

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Cour du Palais, sold an ointment to cure burns, after burning himself publicly on the hands and curing the wounds with his balm, while Galinette-la-Galine attracted the passers by his parades.

In addition to Tabarin's show there were still other theatres on the Pont-Neuf. Maitre Gonin, a skilful juggler, had established himself there, and charmed all Paris by his dexterity; while a little farther off Briochee had his marionette show.

Tabarin, the simple clown of an ointment seller, played the innocent, and put a thousand ridiculous questions to his master who, dressed as a doctor, answered his facetious interrogations by calling him big ass, fat pig, etc., and this spectacle drew the crowd. One saw there not only the people but personages from the first classes of society.

Urbain, who was walking along, dreaming of his love, that is to say without noticing anything before him, elbowing everybody who approached him, was pushed by the crowd before the theatre of the fashionable buffoon. The young bachelor heard shouts of laughter from all sides; he saw noblemen, young girls, workmen, and workwomen who, with their noses in the air, listened with delight to a man who was dressed in a clown's cap, smock frock, and large pantaloons, and whose face was covered by a mask; this man was Tabarin. His master, in a doctor's habit, his head covered

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with a basque cap, his chin adorned with a long beard, held some bottles of ointment or balm in his hands. Urbain mechanically looked and listened with the others; in order to judge of that which gave so much pleasure to the idlers of that century, let us, also, listen for a moment.

TABARIN. — What people have you found to be the most courteous in the world?

THE MASTER. — I've been in Italy, I have visited Spain, and traversed a great part of Germany, but nowhere have I remarked so much courtesy as one sees in France. You observe that the French, kiss, caress, wish each other well, and take off the hat.

TABARIN. — Do you call taking off the hat an act of courtesy? I shouldn't care much about such caresses.

THE MASTER. — The custom of taking off the hat as a mark of friendship is ancient, Tabarin, and bears witness to the honor, the respect, and the friendliness which one should feel for those whom he salutes.

TABARIN. — So you judge all courtesy to consist in taking off the hat? Would you like to know who are the most courteous people in the world?

THE MASTER. — Who Tabarin?

TABARIN. — They are the tireurs de laine of Paris; for they are not content with taking off

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the hat only, but more often take off the cloak also.[1]

This sally was received with the applause and laughter of the assembled crowd, among whom might undoubtedly be found some tireurs de laine, who plied their trade while laughing still louder than their neighbors.

Urbain did not share the general hilarity; however, he lent his ear to a new scene which the buffoon was playing. Tabarin, seeking to introduce himself to the presence of his Isabelle, whom Cascandre kept from sight as an old duenna, found no better expedient than to disguise himself as a woman, and under this costume to seek a tête-à-tête with his mistress. The harlequin mask which Tabarin wore under his feminine costume lent a thousand absurdities which evoked anew the gayety of the crowd and in which decency was not always scrupulously observed; but the public of the Pont-Neuf was not easily abashed, and the women of good standing who viewed this spectacle contented themselves with spreading their fans before their eyes and crying, —

"What unbecoming, scandalous actions; they should at least forbid these gestures."

Urbain, watching the grotesque disguise of the buffoon, conceived a plan. Why should he not use the same means to introduce himself into the

[1] General collection of the Œuvres et Facéties de Tabarin, Paris, 1725.

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barber's house? Was it not Love himself who taught him this strategy by making him a witness of this scene of Tabarin's at the moment when he was racking his brain to find out a way of approaching Blanche.

Whether it were Love, Destiny, or a chance which had led our lover, he was none the less delighted with his idea, and, giving a thousand thanks to Tabarin, he thought of nothing but putting it into execution. Immediately, pushing from right to left, he retired from the crowd. Urbain elbowed a grisette, twisted an old woman's cloak, crushed the foot of a little woman who, supported on the arm of a young student, had slipped among the crowd; but, insensible to the injuries which he inflicted, he continued to make his way and, finding himself free at last, ran to his dwelling without stopping to take breath.

Arrived there the young bachelor opened the drawer of a little walnut-wood secretary and counted his money, for in every affair it is necessary to have recourse to this cursed money in order to abolish obstacles and arrive more quickly at the end which one has in view. His treasury held only sixteen livres tournois, which is very little and would not, in our day, introduce one into the boudoir of a Lais; but when beauty is accompanied by innocence access is much easier.

Besides Urbain would not take the costume of a grand lady. On the contrary he wished to dis-

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guise himself as a peasant; his awkwardness in that costume would be less noticeable. He looked at himself in his little glass. No beard, no whiskers, not the smallest hair on his chin. Urbain jumped for joy; although some days previously he had sighed to have mustaches, to-day he wished to change into a girl. He was delighted also at not being very tall, and exclaimed to himself, while looking at his feet and hands which were small,—

"How fortunate it is that I'm not a strong, robust, fine man!"

He had only to bestir himself to get the necessary clothing. Urbain took his crown and went to a second-hand clothier, where he asked for a dress for a servant from the country, who, he said, was about his height. They showed him all that constituted the feminine costume, petticoat, corset, apron, cap, neckerchief, shoes; they made him pay three times their value, but our young man was delighted.

These little arrangements having taken some time, Urbain went to dinner. Then, at the close of day, he returned home with his little parcel under his arm, as pleased as Jason carrying the Golden Fleece, as Pluto ravishing Proserpine, as Apollo tearing off the skin of the Python, as Hercules bearing off the Golden Apples from the garden of the Hesperides, or as Paris abducting the wife of Menelas,—and certainly all of those men should have been very well pleased.

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Arrived in his chamber our lover rubbed his flint, for at that time nothing was known of sulphur matches. Having procured a light he immediately proceeded to change his state, keeping of his masculine costume only the garment which he judged to be very necessary in order not to freeze under his feminine skirt. Urbain put on the skirt, then the corset, which he endeavored to lace, but he did it very badly; he drew one string instead of another, he ripped and pulled, he pricked himself. The poor boy was in despair, he looked at himself in his little glass and saw well that all was not right; he never should come to the end. What could he do? Only a woman knows all the mysteries of the feminine toilet. It was necessary, then, to beg some woman to come to his aid, and he recalled that on the story below him lodged an old bachelor whose servant, polite and intelligent, always made him a graceful curtsey. Immediately Urbain, holding as well as he could the skirt and the corset, ran down stairs as quickly as possible and rang his neighbor's bell. The servant opened the door, and burst into a shout of laughter on seeing this person, half man, half woman; but no matter how he's dressed a pretty boy of nineteen is always interesting, and Urbain's voice was very touching as he said to the maid, —

"Ah, mademoiselle, I'm very much in doubt. I wish to dress myself as a woman, and I shall

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never come to the end. Would you be so amiable as to help me for a moment?"

"Very willingly" answered the big girl and, without allowing him to beg further, she followed Urbain to his room, where she laughed still more on seeing how he had put on the costume.

"Are you going to a ball?" said she to him.

"Yes, and I wish to be so well disguised that nobody could recognize me."

"All right; wait, I'll dress you, and I promise you you'll look well."

Immediately she commenced undoing all that Urbain had done. Then she examined the garments.

"They're not very elegant," she said.

"They are all I desire, I wish to be very simply dressed."

"But it's necessary to put another skirt on underneath, that one there isn't enough; you haven't hips like us. We must make some for you. And that cap is horrid! I wouldn't go out in it. I'll go and get you one of mine, and everything else that you need. Oh, I'll make you genteel."

And the young servant, without listening to Urbain's thanks, ran to her room, whence she soon returned carrying all that was necessary to turn a young man into a passable looking girl. The new cap was tried, it suited perfectly. Urbain was delighted; he did not know how to testify

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his gratitude to the young girl. The latter had not finished his headdress, there were some bows to be made and some hair which must be pushed back. She pinned his kerchief closely about his neck, stopped, looked at him, and exclaimed, —

"Truly that does very well! Such a white skin, such a sweet air; anyone would be deceived in him, that's sure. Wait a moment, till I make a false bust."

"Is it really necessary?"

"Is it necessary — why, what a question!"

"But I'm stifling in this corset."

"Well, so do we stifle in them, but that's nothing; it's necessary to suffer a little if one wants to be genteel. Wait, now, I'll pull your waist in, then I'll make you some hips, and then, ah, yes, that's all that's necessary. It's by those things that one distinguishes the sex."

The young servant kept finding something more to do for Urbain, and the latter, in order to be well disguised, allowed her to do as she pleased with the best grace in the world, repeating every moment, —

"How good you are, mademoiselle, how can I ever prove my gratitude?"

Urbain's toilet had lasted more than two hours, at the end of which time the young girl left him, saying, —

"There, that's done, you don't look a bit like a man now; there's not the least thing to make

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them doubt that you're a girl. At this hour you can go out. Hold your eyes down, look from the side, take small steps, balance yourself straight from the hips, pinch your mouth, throw your nose up a little high, and you won't go to the end of the street without making a conquest. Good-by, monsieur, when you have need don't hesitate to call me if you please."

The young servant departed, and Urbain, after having studied his walk for a little while, decided at last to venture into the streets of Paris in his new costume.

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CHAPTER XII

A Nocturnal Adventure

The bachelor in cap and crinoline felt sufficiently ill at his ease in the streets of Paris. Although he was protected by the darkness of the night, for there were few who carried lanterns, every time anyone passed near him Urbain was afraid that he had been recognized, and fully expected to be taken by the sergeants of the watch, who would doubtless demand the motive of his disguising himself, and fleece him to the extent of a heavy fine or even perhaps lock him up, if he continued to walk in the guise of a woman in the good city of Paris, where it was only by distributing money in handfuls that one was allowed to pass for what he was not; and, as Urbain had not a crown about him, because when disguising one's self as a woman one does not remember everything, even to the putting of money in his pocket, the young lover felt it necessary to avoid the police; at all events, he did not fear robbers; that was much, then, and may still prove something of a consolation to those who have nothing to lose today.

Little by little Urbain grew more assured; he

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began to feel accustomed to his costume, and certain compliments addressed to him in passing proved to him that people were entirely deceived as to his sex. Urbain was careful not to respond to the gallantries offered him by a few cavaliers, but contented himself by walking faster, escaping with muddied skirts since he did not yet know very well how to hold them up and they greatly embarrassed him in jumping the streams of dirty water. At length he reached the Rue des Bourdonnaise; and then for the first time he reflected that it was very late to try to introduce himself into the barber's house. There was no likelihood of Marguerite's venturing out at this hour; his disguise would therefore not serve him till the next day. His assumption of feminine raiment had been useless so far; but does a lover make such reflections? Besides, as Urbain had to habituate himself to wearing women's clothes, he was not displeased at making his first essay at night. While thus thinking he rambled past the barber's house, ogling Blanche's windows, and sending her a thousand sighs which she could not hear because she was asleep, and which probably she would not have heard any better had she been awake.

Wholly engrossed in the pleasure of sighing under his lady love's casements, Urbain forgot that while it is natural to see a young man waiting and sighing in the street at night, a solitary woman doing the like evokes many conjectures. All

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of a sudden the young lover was recalled from his ecstacy by some unknown person who pinched him very hard on the knee, and said to him, in a hoarse, rasping voice,—

"It seems to me, little mother, that the one you're waiting for is something late; if you'll only accept my arm we can go and taste some very fair white wine at the merchant's down yonder. I'm a good customer of his, and he has some comfortable private rooms."

Urbain turned sharply round and perceived at his side a big, jolly fellow, in the garb of a chair porter, who was offering his arm and smiling almost to his ears. Without answering, and little pleased by this adventure, the young man began to run, soon leaving his gallant in the lurch. But his troubles were not to end there; some two hundred steps farther on, he was stopped anew by some pages who essayed to kiss him; he disengaged himself from them as speedily as possible, and resumed his course. Later he was in turn accosted by some students, some lackeys, and some soldiers, several of them pursuing him. Urbain, that he might the better escape them, redoubled his agility, and, in order to run faster, gathered his skirts up about his knees; but the higher he pulled them, the greater ardor these gentlemen evinced in following him.

"Hang it," said Urbain, while running, "I didn't disguise myself as a woman to be pinched

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by all the pages and lackeys of this city. Men are the devil incorporate; I perceive now that it's more agreeable to wear breeches than petticoats, but tomorrow I shall obtain entrance to Blanche's dwelling. Come, courage — they'll leave me alone perhaps."

And Urbain jumped over the puddles, wound among the streets, perspiring and suffocating in his corset, and under the false bosom with which the young servant had stuffed his chest. Turning down the streets at random as he came to them, in order to escape his pursuers, he did not know himself in what neighborhood he was.

At last, not hearing anyone behind him, he stopped to take breath and recognize the place in which he stood. He had passed the bridges and had reached the great Pré-aux-Clercs, in which they had commenced to build houses and open streets; as they had done in the little Pré-aux-Clercs, which towards the end of the reign of Henri the Fourth was entirely covered with houses and gardens.

"Good; here's the new street they call Rue de Verneuil," said Urbain to himself; "and this is the Chemin-aux-Vaches where they've built the Rue Saint-Dominique; I recognize it. But I'll rest for a minute or two, I'm too far from home to return there immediately — I can't walk any farther. Let's get my breath at least. This neighborhood's deserted, and, as night is far advanced, let's hope I shall make no more conquests." Urbain hoisted

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his skirts and seated himself on a stone. At the expiration of half an hour, feeling rested, he rose and took the way to his lodgings. He walked quietly along congratulating himself that he should meet no one else when suddenly, in passing by the Rue de Bourbon, he saw four men who were leaving it and who, on sight of him, barred the way.

"Who goes there? So late — and the game is still rising?"

"Upon my honor a charming meeting, it's a little country wench."

"Better still. I'm very fond of peasants."

"What the devil, marquis! a peasant who walks about Paris in the middle of the night. That's an innocence which seems to me tremendously adventurous."

"Come, chevalier, your thoughts are always evil. I'll wager the poor child came to Paris for nothing but to sell her eggs."

"Let her have come for what she will, she sha'n't return without the impress of my mustaches on her pretty lips."

Urbain realized by the language and manners of these gentlemen that they were profligates of the higher classes. Unable to make his escape, for he was surrounded on every side, he tried to relieve himself of them by saying in a falsetto voice, —

"Gentlemen, leave me, I beg of you; I am not what you believe."

But his prayers were unheeded; they pushed

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him, they surrounded him. Urbain, rendered impatient by these manners, saw no means of regaining his liberty save making himself known, and he cried in his natural voice,—

"Leave me, gentlemen, I repeat to you, you are addressing the wrong person."

These words, pronounced by the young bachelor in a manner which left no doubt as to his sex, produced the effect of a head of Medusa on the four young noblemen: they remained motionless for a moment, then they all burst into a shout of laughter, crying: "It's a man. What a unique adventure."

"Yes, gentlemen, it is a man," answered Urbain. "I hope now that you will allow me to continue on my way."

"As for me, I will no longer oppose you," said one of the strangers.

"Come, Villebelle," resumed another, "let the boy go. You can see very well he's not a girl. I believe, deuce take it, that the wine we've drunk didn't allow the marquis to see our mistake. Isn't that so, chevalier?"

"Yes, yes, indeed, gentlemen," answered the Marquis de Villebelle; for it was that nobleman himself, who, as he had said to the barber, made merry with his friends by seeking spicy adventures in the streets of the capital. With a head excited by wines and liqueurs, the marquis, always the leader in the follies and extravagances committed in these

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escapades, had pressed Urbain most closely, and on the latter making himself known had continued to hold the young bachelor.

"A moment, my boy," said he, stopping Urbain. "We know you're not a girl, that's all very well; but, by all the devils! in this disguise you must necessarily have had some very comical adventures; recount them to us, 't will amuse us, and afterwards you shall be free to go your way."

"Yes, yes," repeated the others; "he must tell us why he's dressed up like a woman."

"I must really tell this adventure at the cardinal's little levée tomorrow morning.

"And I must tell it to Marion Delorme. I'll have Bois-Robert put it into verse for the court."

"Colletel shall turn it into a comedy. Come, speak on."

"Yet, once more, gentlemen, allow me to go on my way; by what right do you interrogate me? I have nothing to say to you, and I wish to depart."

Saying these words, he endeavored to repulse the marquis anew, but the latter barred the way and drew his sword, crying, —

"Upon my honor, this little goodman is very fractious. It's really too droll. You shall speak or we will make you jump under our swords like a spaniel."

"Insolent fellow," exclaimed Urbain, furiously; "had I a weapon you had not dared to use such

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language to me, or I should already have chastised you."

"Truly? Oh, hang it. I should like to see how you handle a sword. Come, chevalier, lend him yours."

"What, Villebelle, you wish it?"

"Yes, undoubtedly, a duel with a peasant — that will be a joke."

"Come, gentlemen, make a circle."

So saying, the marquis took a sword from one of his companions and presented it to Urbain.

"Hold," said he, "here's a weapon, defend yourself. Guard yourself, girl-boy, and let us see if you are as brave as you're stubborn."

Urbain seized the sword with ardor and immediately attacked the marquis. Though embarrassed by his petticoats and corset he pressed impetuously on his adversary, who, while parrying his strokes, exclaimed at every moment, —

"Well done; very well done, 'pon my honor! Do you see that, gentlemen? — and that parry — and that thrust. Deuce take it, if he goes on in this way I must use all my skill to — "

A stroke of his adversary's sword, which crossed his forearm, cut short the marquis' words; his sword dropped from his hand, his friends surrounded and supported him, while Urbain himself offered his help.

"It's nothing — a mere nothing," said the marquis; "good-by, my friend, you're a brave fellow,

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and I'm pleased to have made your acquaintance; although I don't know with whom I've fought this duel. As to you, if some day you find yourself in any embarrassment, if you have a bad business or need a protector, come to my hotel, ask for the Marquis de Villebelle and you will always find me ready to oblige you."

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CHAPTER XIII

The Tête-à-Tête

Dawn had followed this night so fruitful in events, during which sleep had not touched Julia's eyes; uneasy, impatient, twenty times had she arisen from her sofa to go to the door and listen, in the belief that she could at last distinguish some sound, some disturbance which indicated the approach of the marquis. But though she had heard every hour strike during this to her apparently endless night, the seductive Villebelle had not yet arrived.

The brow of the young Italian was clouded; her eyes, always vivacious and lustrous, under her change of feeling were now animated by a gloomy fire which boded ill for those who had caused it; Julia's breast was oppressed, sighs escaped her lips and she walked aimlessly and angrily about the apartment, the elegance of which no longer delighted her; she passed the mirrors without even looking at herself in them. Her vanity was most painfully mortified and humiliated, she felt insulted by the indifference of this marquis who had led her to compromise herself thus, and now failed to keep his appointment, whose conduct, in fact,

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was inexcusable. What woman would pardon such neglect?

To allow herself to be abducted with a good grace, and to be forced to spend the entire night following in solitude. Love will excuse many things, but self-love excuses nothing.

As soon as daylight paled the light of the candles, Julia opened the door of the boudoir and, crossing several rooms, ventured into the corridor.

"I don't believe that I can escape," she said, smiling bitterly; "they have taken too many precautions to keep me; but monsieur le marquis and his worthy agent no doubt imagine me to be in a state of ecstatic happiness at the mere fact of having been brought to this house. Patience! One day perhaps they will know me better."

Julia went downstairs. Although it was in the depth of winter the morning was beautiful; the young Italian left by the peristyle and plunged into the gardens, where she walked up and down the long pathways and gave herself up to her thoughts.

Day had surprised Marcel and his guest sleeping near the table where they had supped. Marcel awoke first, recalled his ideas, and could not conceive why his master had not returned in the night. However, the door-bell hung in the room where they had slept, and the marquis was a man who was able to make himself heard.

Marcel pushed Chaudoreille, who opened his

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little eyes and gazed about him in astonishment, murmuring, —

"By jingo! I am not at home in the Rue Brisemiche nor in the gambling den on the Rue Vide-Gousset. Where the devil have I passed the night? My purse — where is my purse? I had eight crowns in it."

Chaudoreille quickly seized his purse and counted his money, and Marcel said to him, —

"Come, wake up, why don't you? and remember where you are. Do you think me capable of robbing you?"

"Good-for-nothing that I am! that good fellow Marcel — I remember everything now. Forgive me, my friend; but at the first moment I thought I was at a tavern where I sleep sometimes. What the devil! it's broad daylight."

"Yes, and monsieur le marquis did not come in during the night; I can't understand why."

"It is rather singular, and that poor little thing whom we took so much trouble to bring here, what has she done with herself since yesterday?"

"She's slept the same as we have."

"Ah, my dear Marcel, it's easily seen that you have not studied the sex. Sleep! — a woman who is waiting her vanquisher for the first time? She would sooner keep awake all night than go to sleep."

"But when the vanquisher doesn't come, it's necessary for her to do something."

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"Never! never I tell you. Wait, here's an example: I had once arranged a meeting with a baroness on the borders of the Seine, near the Tour de Nesle; that also was in winter, and it was horribly cold. Unforeseen events — a duel — prevented my meeting my beauty. I was wounded, and spent eight days in bed. On the ninth, as I passed the neighborhood indicated, by chance, whom should I see there?"

"Your baroness?"

"Exactly. But, the poor woman, she had been frozen for four days, and that because she would not leave the place of rendezvous."

"Our dame has a good fire and everything that she can desire; she won't freeze while awaiting my master."

"What do you say, Marcel; shall I go upstairs and chat pleasantly with her to distract her mind a little?"

"No, indeed, that would be displeasing to monsieur le marquis."

"Well, you're right; I suppose he might take offence at it."

"Don't you think you had much better go and find the person who brought her here, and tell him that monsieur has not come?"

"No, my dear Marcel; Touquet told me to wait here for the marquis' orders, and I must follow his instructions. If he does not come for a fortnight, it's all the same to me; I shall not leave

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this. You have a good cellar and plenty of provisions of all kinds, and I find it very comfortable here; only, I must go out and get some cards for the coming night, and I'll teach you some tricks which you don't understand."

"All right, I'll go and get our breakfast ready; then I'll go and inquire whether the young lady wants anything."

"That will do; meanwhile I'll take a turn in the garden and make the acquaintance of your Hercules."

Chaudoreille arranged his mantle, put on his new ruff, which he had bought by chance, which pleased him greatly because it came up to his ears. He brushed up his hat, curled his hair anew, and went into the garden whistling, —

Viens Aurore,
Je t' implore;

a song which good King Henri had brought into fashion. He paused with an air of defiance before the statues, and made a grimace at those which had frightened him the evening before.

At the end of the pathway he perceived Julia, seated in a thicket which, as yet, was devoid of foliage. The young girl was deep in thought, and had not heard him approach. Chaudoreille reflected, uncertain whether he should approach her or whether he should pass on his way. He concluded to do the first, and drew near her, holding

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his left hand on his hip, and, throwing his body back, already beginning to smile. Julia raised her luminous eyes; but, on recognizing Chaudoreille, a look of humor flashed over her features, and she said sharply, —

"What do you want with me?"

Chaudoreille paused, arrested in the middle of his smile, and could not find words to answer her.

"Why were you coming to me?" resumed Julia; "is the marquis here, or his confidant, the barber Touquet?"

"No, beautiful lady, I am at present alone with you and Marcel in the house. I have passed the night in watching over your safety, believing that the marquis would arrive."

"Who is this Marcel? the servant who opened the door to us, I suppose."

"Precisely!"

"He has served the marquis for a long time in this house?"

"No, I believe he has only been here four or five years."

"And you, when did you come here?"

"I came yesterday for the first time."

Julia was silent and Chaudoreille resumed after a moment, —

"Are you acquainted with my intimate friend, the barber Touquet?"

"What does that matter to you," asked the young Italian, glancing scornfully at Chaudoreille.

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"It's nothing to me, certainly — but, since you named him — he's a very worthy fellow, certainly, and I am honored in being his friend."

"That reflects credit on you," said Julia, smiling ironically.

"Yes, most assuredly," resumed Chaudoreille, who had interpreted Julia's smile to his own advantage, "we have seen fire together. He is brave, I'll give him justice for that; he always conducts himself honorably."

"Always? And has he sometimes spoken to you of his parents? — of his father?"

"My faith, no; I don't believe he was born from the higher classes. In that matter I am infinitely before him; the Chaudoreilles are of very pure blood and have a stock which goes back to Noah. Under Charles the Bald one of my ancestors had himself shaved — "

"What does it matter what your ancestors did? I was talking about the barber's family."

"That's all right; but my friend Touquet has spoken very little to me about them. I believe he is from Lorraine and he has told me that he left his country very early and came very young to Paris, for it is only there that talent has a chance of success; also Touquet has made money, and me, thank God, I am — "

Here Chaudoreille's eyes wandered over his doublet, which was stained in many places, and he covered it with his mantle, resuming, —

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"I should be very rich if I had not ruined myself for women."

Julia, who had paid little attention to this last phrase, said to herself, —

"He ought to be rich if he has helped the marquis in all his follies."

"He is not married," resumed Chaudoreille, "although he could now find a good match. His house on the Rue des Bourdonnais is a very pretty property. Perhaps it's because of the little one that he doesn't marry; perhaps he is going to marry her, I shouldn't be surprised."

"What little one," inquired Julia, curiously.

"The young girl whom he has adopted and who is now sixteen years old."

"The barber Touquet has adopted a child?"

"Why, yes, of course he has. Why, if you know him, how is it that you are ignorant of that? That's certainly the best act of his life."

"Touquet has done a good action," said Julia, smiling ironically; "I could not have imagined that, and is this young girl pretty?"

"Hang it! is she pretty? Well, I believe you! She is one — but no," said Chaudoreille, correcting himself as if struck by a sudden remembrance, "she is not handsome at all; on the contrary, she is ugly, one might even say that she is disagreeable."

"One minute you say she is pretty and the next you say she is very ugly; you don't seem

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to know what you are saying, Monsieur Chaudoreille."

"One can easily lose his wits when near you, beautiful damsel; but, by that sword, I swear to you — "

The bell at the garden gate was heard, Chaudoreille stopped; presuming that it was the marquis and that it would perhaps be dangerous for him to be surprised in a tête-à-tête with Julia, he escaped by the first pathway and ran to rejoin Marcel, while the young Italian listened anxiously and her cheeks assumed a more vivid color.

Marcel opened the door, but it was not the marquis, it was Touquet, who came alone.

"Your master fought a duel last night," said he to Marcel, "he was wounded, but very slightly, it seems. I have come to speak to the young girl. She is perhaps anxious to know what all this means. Where is she now?"

"In the garden," said Chaudoreille, "but I assure you she is not at all lonely here. It is true that I have chatted with her — "

"And who gave you permission to do so? You're very bold to converse with a woman on whom a marquis has laid his eyes."

"Yes, I confess that I am very bold — but I believe you say that monseigneur fought a duel; do you know with whom he fought?"

"Idiot! Is that our business? Do you suppose I asked him?"

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"It's true, it's not our business, but — "

"You have nothing more to do here, get out."

"Do you wish me to take myself off? "

"Yes, and immediately."

"Without being presented to monseigneur, that is very awkward; but at least — it seems to me that if they have no more need of me they ought to settle with me."

"Wait! here are ten more crowns; it's more than you are worth, a hundred times."

"Very well, but the rosette and the broken pane of glass —"

"Hang it, stupid! you're not satisfied? "

"It's all right, it's all right, I'm very well pleased. I mustn't grumble," added Chaudoreille to himself, "he might happen to remember the shaves that I owe him."

"Go at once," said the barber, angrily, pointing with his finger to the garden gate. The Gascon hastily thrust the sum which he had received into his purse, and placed the latter carefully in his belt, murmuring, —

"Ten and eight, that's eighteen. By jingo, that will make them stare at the gambling place in the Rue Vide-Gousset and at the bank of the Rue Coupe-Gorge." Then he shook Marcel's hand, and wrapping himself in his mantle left by the middle gate, which was hardly wide enough for him since he possessed eighteen crowns.

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The barber hastened to acquit himself of the commission with which his master had charged him, that he might return promptly to his house and be there on the arrival of his customers. He walked hurriedly through the garden, and soon met Julia, who felt her hope vanish when she perceived him.

"Madame," said Touquet, bowing to the young girl, "the marquis' conduct doubtless seems to you rather extraordinary, but you will excuse him when you learn that he fought a duel last night in the grand Pré-aux-Clercs and was wounded."

"He is wounded," said Julia, with emotion, "and dangerously?"

"No, madame, it is a very little thing, an arm only. Monsieur le marquis made this event known to me at break of day and ordered me to come and tell you. He hoped to be very soon recovered, and able within four or five days to come and excuse himself; but, if you are wearied in this place, you are free to return to your shop. I will go and warn you when —"

"No," said Julia, interrupting him brusquely; "do you imagine I can return to the dwelling I have left? I will wait for the marquis."

"You are the mistress, and they have orders to satisfy your slightest wishes."

The barber bowed to Julia, and having given Marcel the marquis' orders, left the little house and returned to his home.

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Five days had elapsed since the young Italian had entered the luxurious apartments; there she had found a harpsichord, a sitar, books, some pencils, some sketches, and a wardrobe furnished with everything that could add a charm to beauty. Marcel, always obedient and discreet, brought her everything that she desired, without permitting himself the slightest question; nor did Julia address him, except to ask him for what she thought necessary to distract her, for the most magnificent dwelling does not forbid weariness.

It was late on the evening of the sixth day; Julia was attired with coquetry, in the hope that the marquis would come, but her hope was vanishing. She lay down upon the sofa, where her reverie had yielded to a light slumber, when the door of the room opened softly, and the Marquis de Villebelle appeared at the entrance of the apartment. "She's not half bad," said he, looking at Julia, who was lying carelessly on the sofa; then he advanced towards her; the noise awoke the young Italian, and, opening her eyes, she perceived the great nobleman, whose rich and elegant costume increased the grace of his bearing. He seated himself, smiling, at her side. Julia was about to rise.

"Don't move," said the marquis, "you are very well as you are. I reproach myself with having disturbed your slumber."

"Monseigneur, I had about given you up,"

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said Julia, seeking to restrain the uneasiness which she felt at the sight of the marquis. "I have been here for six days, alone in this place."

"Yes, you must have found it very tiresome I can imagine; but, ma belle, my messenger must have told you that it was not my fault. My arm is not cured yet, but I could not longer resist the desire to see this amiable child who for love of me was willing to live in solitude."

"For love of you, seigneur," said Julia, turning her eyes aside so as not to meet those of the marquis, which were fixed amorously upon her; "and who has made you believe that I am in love with you, if you please?"

"Ah, upon my honor, that is divine. Were you awaiting another here, then, my angel?"

"I was waiting, monsieur, to learn from you what motive you had in inducing me to leave my dwelling."

"Delightful by all the devils — delightful. She does not know why they brought her here. Did nobody tell you, little strategist?"

"It was from you alone that I wished to hear it, seigneur."

"That is correct. Love is ill made by an ambassador; the little god does not love pages and valets. He wishes to do his work himself. Come, a kiss first, and we shall understand each other better afterwards."

Julia disengaged herself from the marquis' arms,

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which he had wound about her, and withdrawing from him she cried, —

"Please, sir, cease these liberties which offend me!"

"Which offend her!" said the marquis, bursting into laughter, while a vivid color sprang to Julia's cheek. "Come now, what do you mean by that? Are we playing a comedy? You wish to make me pay for the weariness of six days' waiting. Once more, sweetheart, it was not my fault; a duel at the moment when I was least thinking of it. I must tell you all about that for it was very droll. I was returning with four of my friends; we were a little tipsy and were trying to dispute with everybody. We broke windows, we beat the watch, we tore off the good shopkeepers' wigs; what can you expect? one must pass the time and show these gentlemen of the parliament that one does not regard one's self as being comprised in their edicts, which forbid vagabonds, pages and lackeys to make a noise at night in the streets of Paris. Finally, we met a girl, which girl was a boy; he would not tell us why he was disguised, and became angry at our joking; one of the others lent him a sword and we fought. For a youngster, zooks how he went on! it was a pleasure to fight with him. In short, he gave me this cut, which I still feel, and which prevents me from using my arm; so, sweetheart, I beg of you don't be too cruel, for I am not in a state to lead an assault."

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And the marquis again approached Julia, wishing to enfold her in his arms; but she disengaged herself and seated herself farther off, while the former extended himself on the sofa and looked at her smiling, while whistling a hunting tune.

The breast of the young girl rose more frequently; she turned her head and carried one of her hands to her eyes.

"What is the matter?" said the marquis, after some minutes. "Are you crying, by chance? Truly, little one, I can't imagine why. They told me that you came here with a very good grace; after which I naturally feel surprised at the severity which you are affecting now; be easy, I will be very virtuous — since you wish it."

So saying, Villebelle seated himself near Julia and took one of her hands, which he pressed between his own. The young Italian raised her eyes to the marquis; there was in the features of the latter something so noble, so seductive, that it was very easy for him to obtain pardon for his audacity; accustomed to triumph, he had trespassed through habit and not through fatuity, and Julia's resistance astonished, but did not anger him.

"Why are you crying?" said he to her.

"I believed that you loved me, and you despise me."

"I despise you? No, beautiful girl; I love you, — as well as I can love; and my love will last, — as long as it will; can you ask better?"

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"I wish for love; a constant and sincere love."

"Ha! ha! a constant love; sweetheart, you are exacting. Can we promise that, we others? and in good faith, when the great ladies of the court cannot come by it, to a grisette; should she hope to hold the Marquis de Villebelle?"

"Very well," said Julia, rising proudly and walking towards the door, "the grisette will not yield to the caprice of the great nobleman."

"Upon my honor, she is going, I believe," said the marquis, rushing to retain Julia and gently leading her to the sofa. "Come, no more ill-humor. Is it to quarrel that we are here? Time flies rapidly and carries with it, at every moment, a spark of the enkindling fires of love. One doesn't wait for pleasure to be extinguished before tasting of it. I love you. I adore you, you little wretch; but what do you offer me as the reward of so much ardor?"

"A heart that knows how to love you in a manner in which you have not been loved before today, a heart whose only happiness will be to beat for you, which will not have one thought to which you will be a stranger, nor one desire disconnected from you!"

While saying these words Julia's eyes were animated and she fixed them on the marquis, seeking no longer to hide the passion with which he had inspired her.

"What magnificent eyes," said Villebelle, after

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a moment, "but a little too exalted in their expression. You are Italian, that is easily seen, the burning skies under which you were born do not allow you to treat love as we French treat it, lightly, jokingly; which is, after all, the best way; the others are too sad."

"Say, rather, that we know how to love truly — while you, seigneur, give the name of love to the most fleeting fancy, your heart being entirely a stranger to the real passion."

"Wait, my dear girl! All your discourses on the metaphysics of love are less convincing to me than one kiss from those lovely lips, and why should you keep up such a show of resistance? Is it generous to profit by my being wounded?"

"Have you always been generous, monseigneur?" said Julia, repulsing the marquis; "and in this place, even, have you nothing to reprove yourself withal?"

"Why, how's this, little girl, do you wish me to follow a course of morals?" said Villebelle, laughing. "It seems to me you are abusing my patience a little. 'Pon my honor those lovely eyes are made to express pleasure rather than wisdom. And sermons from your mouth! a little grisette who wishes to play Lucretia here. Come, sweetheart, leave such twaddling talk. Was it from Tabarin or from Briochée that you learned those sentences?"

Julia rose, her eyes scintillating, her cheeks a

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vivid scarlet, and looking angrily at the marquis cried, —

"And you, seigneur, where did you learn to murder a father in order to abduct his daughter?"

Villebelle remained as if stunned for a moment; his look fixed on Julia, who, dismayed herself at the change wrought in the whole appearance of the marquis, awaited with fear what he should say to her.

The marquis rose, and murmured in a changed voice, —

"What made you think I had ever committed such a terrible crime? Speak, answer, I command you."

"Seigneur," said the young Italian, "I have heard the story of the abduction of the beautiful Estrelle, old Delmar's daughter, but the barber Touquet was then your agent, and I don't doubt that it was he who wanted you to arm yourself against an old man who was defending his daughter."

"You have heard some one speak of an adventure which has been forgotten for seventeen years and you are barely twenty. You have not told me all — have you known Estrelle? Is she still living? Speak, pray speak, and count on my gratitude if you assist me to recover that unfortunate woman."

"You loved her well, did you not?" said Julia, gazing tenderly at the marquis.

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"Yes, yes, I loved her — I should love her still. Pray tell me, is she still living? Answer me."

"I know no more than you, seigneur, I swear to you. I have never met the woman who bore that name, and chance made the adventure known to me. On seeing you and on finding myself in this house, to which Estrelle was brought, the remembrance of these events was presented to my thoughts; forgive me for having recalled them to you — you were then very young; I know, also that old Delmar did not die of his wounds. As to his daughter, I repeat to you I know no more of her than you do. But you had outraged me in comparing me to those women whom you can purchase every day with your riches, while I only desire your love. I am Italian and I revenged myself!"

The marquis did not answer, he walked slowly up and down the room, from time to time sighing and glancing around him; but he did not appear to perceive that Julia was there.

"Yes, I passed a month with her here," said the marquis, looking around the boudoir, "this abode was not what it is today. I have embellished it, changed it, in order to drive away the remembrance of her; but never since have I experienced such entrancing moments as those spent near Estrelle."

A long silence succeeded these words; then the

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marquis took his hat and cloak and slightly inclined his head to Julia, as he said, in a low voice, —

"I shall see you again tomorrow."

Then he hurriedly quitted the little house in a very different frame of mind from that in which he had entered it.

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CHAPTER XIV

Ursule and the Sorcerer of Verberie

For some few days after his nocturnal adventure of the duel Urbain refrained from wearing his feminine costume. He was not at all anxious to make any further conquests and to thus expose himself to adventures which were hardly likely to always result to his advantage; the young bachelor felt that before he again disguised himself as a girl he should make sure that his stratagem would bring him nearer to obtaining an interview with Blanche.

He began to watch Marguerite again, prowling incessantly around the barber's house, and obtaining all the information he could get as to the character of the old servant; and he promised himself that he would avail himself to the utmost of her credulity and superstition. His plan being carefully considered and arranged, an old messenger, commissioned by him, accosted Marguerite and asked her if she knew of a place for a young peasant, a very pleasant and virtuous girl, who had lately come to Paris and found herself without employment. The kindly old serving woman at once gave two addresses where she said they

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would perhaps take the young girl, and continued on her way.

The next day while going, according to custom, to buy provisions, Marguerite was stopped by a country woman, very modest in demeanor, but with an awkward air, who curtseyed to her and thanked her with lowered eyes.

"What are you thanking me for, my child?" said Marguerite, "I do not know you."

"Because you interested yourself in me yesterday and tried to find me a place."

"Oh, are you the one they recommended to me?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Did they engage you?"

"No, mademoiselle."

"I am sorry for it, for you seem to me very pleasing, very honest. Where do you come from?"

"From Verberie, mademoiselle."

"Why did you come to Paris?"

"I have lost both my parents and I thought I should find work more easily in a great city."

"Yes, but great cities are dangerous places for virtuous young maids such as you appear to be. They should have told you that, my child."

"Yes, they did, mademoiselle! but I am not afraid of anything."

"Why, you must believe yourself very wary, very strong, to think you can escape the snares they'll set for you."

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"Indeed it's not that, mademoiselle, but it is that — I daren't say — it's a mystery, a secret."

Secret and mystery had the same effect upon the old maid as love and marriage have upon a young maid — they aroused all her feelings. Marguerite's little eyes beamed and she cried, —

"What, my child! you have a secret? I am not curious, but you interest me; I should like to be useful to you, but it's necessary that I should know everything that concerns you. What is this mystery that you dare not mention?"

"Mademoiselle, I did not wish to confide in anyone in Paris, for somebody told me there were pickpockets who would steal my treasure."

"You possess a treasure?"

"Oh, yes, mademoiselle; but one with which I could still die of hunger."

"Why, indeed, what does that matter, my child, hasn't every young girl a treasure without price — her innocence, her virtue — and those who guard it the best are not always the richest. When I see shameless women, who live in luxury and abundance, riding in gilded carriages, it makes me feel ill. But about your secret, my child; would you refuse to confide in me?"

"No, indeed, mademoiselle, you appear so respectable, so good, that I cannot refuse you."

Marguerite half smiled and tapped the country woman on the arm, for praise is a flower whose perfume is grateful at any age.

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"Out with it then," she said. "What is it?"

"Mademoiselle, I'll tell you with much pleasure; but it's a long story, and I must go into a good many houses this morning. If you would let me tell it to you this evening at your house, that would be better, for I dare not say all that in the street; some one might hear me and take me for a sorcerer, and I'm very much afraid of the Chambre Ardente. God knows, however, mademoiselle, that I understand nothing of magic, and I'm more afraid of the devil than I am of men."

"Oh," said Marguerite, whose curiosity had reached an unbearable point, "this mystery of yours is of itself extraordinary?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Indeed! Well, this is very embarrassing; to receive you in the house is difficult. Where do you live, my child?"

Urbain hesitated for a moment, then replied:—

"Near thé Porte Saint-Antoine."

"Oh, good heavens — that's more than a league from here. I could never get there; my master's a very strict man and doesn't wish that anyone should have visitors."

Marguerite reflected for some moments, then her curiosity carried the day.

"Well," said she at last, "come this evening at seven o'clock; it'll be dark; but look well at that house over there — that alleyway."

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"Oh, I shall recognize it."

"Don't knock; keep near the door. I'll let you in, and show you up to my room. At that hour my master doesn't ordinarily need my services, and he never leaves the lower room."

"That's enough, mademoiselle, I'll be there at seven precisely."

"What is your name?"

"Ursule Ledoux."

"Above all, Ursule, don't gossip with anybody about this. It's no crime to receive you, but my master's a little ridiculous and might find it wrong. Besides, my child, one must be discreet in everything. You'll tell me your secret this evening, Ursule?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"At seven o'clock, the house over there."

Urbain departed, delighted by the success of his stratagem, breathing with difficulty, partly from the hope of seeing Blanche and partly because his corset impeded his respiration; and Marguerite reached her dwelling, saying, —

"This young girl looks as sweet as she looks honest, and there's no harm in receiving her for a moment — it'll amuse my poor little Blanche a little; she's been rather sad for some days and seems more lonely than usual; and we shall know the secret which — mon Dieu, if seven o'clock would only come soon."

Marguerite hastened to find Blanche. Since

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the night of the serenade the lovely child had been even more dreamy than before; she sang nothing but the refrain of her dear romance, and the villanelles, the virelays, the old songs amused her no longer. Marguerite drew near to her and said mysteriously, in a low tone, —

"This evening we shall have a visitor."

"A visitor," said Blanche. "Oh, M. Chaudoreille I suppose."

"No, indeed, a very pleasing, very honest young country girl whom you don't know. A poor child who possesses a treasure and who is looking for a place as cook; she wishes to remain virtuous, and for that reason has come to Paris; she is afraid of the devil, but of nothing else."

"But dear nurse, I don't understand."

"Hush! hush! keep still! This evening she will come, and we shall hear her story; there is a question of a very curious mystery, but be silent; it is not necessary that M. Touquet should know anything about that for he might forbid this poor Ursule from coming to chat with us, and that would displease me very much because she will amuse you a little, my child."

"Oh, be easy, dear nurse, I shall say nothing," cried Blanche, and she jumped about her room for joy because the announcement of this visit was for her an extraordinary event. The least thing new is a great pleasure for those who pass their lives deprived of all gayety. It is thus that a storm or

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even a shower will distract and occupy a poor prisoner; that a bottle of wine will make a feast for a man of small means habituated to drinking nothing but water; that the sound of a Barbary organ appears delightful to the country people; that a ticket for the play crowns the wishes of the poor workwoman of ten sous a day; that a little muslin dress makes an honest grisette happy; and that Sunday is awaited with impatience by those who work all the week; while for many people fêtes, the theatre, music, diamonds, cannot rejoice their hearts. After all, should not the poor be happier than the rich?

At last seven sounded from Saint Eustache's clock. The barber had long since sent Blanche and Marguerite to shut themselves into their rooms. The old servant went softly downstairs, trying to make as little noise as possible with her heels, and shielding the light of her lamp with her hand. She opened the street door and saw the country girl, who had been waiting for a quarter of an hour.

"That's well," said Marguerite, "you are here; but hush! don't speak, don't make any noise; let me lead you."

Urbain nodded his head and entered the alley-way, while Marguerite softly closed the door. Then our lover was at the height of his joy. It seemed to him that he breathed a purer air in the house of the one he loved. He believed himself

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in the abode of highest bliss while going up the little crooked staircase; and the black and crumbling walls that surrounded him had more charm for his eyes than the marbles or the sculptures of the Louvre.

"You are going to see my mistress," said Marguerite, "I have warned her, but fear nothing, she is as amiable as she is good; you can speak without danger before her, she is discretion itself, — besides, she never sees anybody, and never goes out. My master wishes to shield her against the enterprises of these dandies, of these worthless fellows who seek to cajole the poor girls. It is true that my little Blanche is very pretty; she would turn the heads of all our noblemen, you are going to see her, and you can judge for yourself; here we are at her room. Come in, come, don't tremble so; how childish you are."

Urbain was trembling, in fact, and his heart beat so hard that he was obliged to support himself for a moment against the wall. During this time Marguerite opened the door and said to Blanche, —

"Here she is."

Blanche rose and came to meet the young girl whom her nurse had brought, smiling pleasantly at her. Urbain raised his eyes, saw Blanche, and his emotion increased. He had only been able through the panes of the casement to perceive her features very imperfectly, and the charming object which now met his gaze was a hundred times more

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beautiful than the image which his memory and his imagination had created. He remained for a moment stunned, motionless, not daring to take a step, doubting still whether he could believe his happiness, and looking with delight at the lovely girl, who smiled at him and took him by the hand, saying to him,—

"Won't you come in? Come in and sit down and warm yourself. Why, you're not afraid of me, are you?"

"This is the girl I told you about," announced Marguerite, "but she is a little timid, though she will soon lose that; may she always preserve her modesty in Paris."

Blanche's soft hand slipped into that of the young bachelor and she led him to the fireplace. On feeling the pretty fingers imprinted on his own, Urbain scarcely breathed, and murmured in a feeble voice, —

"How good you are, mademoiselle?"

"She has a very pretty voice," cried Blanche, immediately. "Don't you think so, Marguerite? A voice which I seem to have heard before; it is very singular, I can't recall where I've heard it."

"You are mistaken, my child," said Marguerite, "for myself I think that Ursule's voice is a little rough. But remember that we have not much time to keep her here and she is going to tell us a certain thing."

"One moment," said Blanche, "let her rest for

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a minute, she looks tired. Do you need anything?"

"No, I thank you," said Urbain, raising his eyes on the amiable child, and immediately abasing them, for he feared that she would read in them all the love which consumed him and it seemed to him that the moment was very ill-chosen to make it known; besides, he was so happy near Blanche that he wished to prolong the time, and, thanks to his disguise, he could see the sweet girl practise her graces, her amiability, and learn her character much better than if he had appeared to her in his true form. Before a lover the frankest girl is always timid, embarrassed, reserved, while with a person of her own sex she expresses without constraint the feelings which she experiences.

"And so you are looking for a place?" said Blanche, seating herself near Urbain.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Have you been long in Paris?"

"A fortnight, mademoiselle."

"And your parents?"

"I have none, mademoiselle. I am an orphan."

"Poor girl! that's like me, I am an orphan also, and if M. Touquet had not taken care of me I too should have had to go to work to earn my living."

"You, mademoiselle," said Urbain ardently, but he restrained himself and finished in a low voice, "that would have been very unfortunate."

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"My dear Blanche," said Marguerite, "it was not that you might tell her your history, but that she might acquaint us with the secret she is keeping that she came here. Now, Ursule, speak my child!"

Urbain sighed; he would much rather have listened to Blanche than have talked to Marguerite; but it was necessary to satisfy the old maid, he needed her; and it was by exciting her curiosity that he hoped often to see Blanche. He commenced his recital, disguising his voice, and while he spoke the beautiful child fixed her eyes on him, a favor which he owed to his costume, but which often made him lose the thread of his discourse.

"You have doubtless heard tell of Jeanne Harviliers, so famous a century ago for her witcheries and sorceries."

"No, never," said Marguerite, drawing her chair nearer and stretching her neck, because the word sorcery had already produced its electrical effect upon the old servant. "Tell us the history of this sorcery, my child, and try not to omit a single fact."

"Jeanne Harviliers was born at Verberie in the year 1528. Her mother, they say, was a wicked woman, who dedicated her child to the devil as soon as she came into the world.

"When Jeanne was twelve years old the devil presented himself to her in the guise of a black man, armed and booted."

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"Dear nurse," said Blanche, "can the devil then take any form he pleases?"

"Yes, of course, I've told you so a hundred times; he changes as he wishes."

"You've always said, dear nurse, that he shows himself as a black cat."

"A cat or a man, what does it matter?"

"I was only afraid of cats before, now I shall be afraid of men also."

"Come, mademoiselle, if you interrupt this young girl like that we shall never know her story. Go on, my child!"

Urbain glanced quickly at Blanche and resumed his narration.

"The black man told Jeanne that if she would give herself to him he would teach her a thousand secrets by which she could work good or evil to people according to her will. Jeanne Harviliers yielded to the proposition of the devil, and pronounced the formula which he dictated; she soon became a famous magician, riding to the witches' sabbaths on a broomstick.

"Jeanne practised her art near Verberie, but, being accused of sorcery, she was for some time obliged to hide herself. She had a neighbor who disclosed her whereabouts, and Jeanne asked the devil to give her a charm, that she might revenge herself. He gave her a powder, telling her to place it in a road where her enemy was about to pass, and it would give the latter a malady of

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which she would die. Jeanne did as the devil had told her, and placed the charm; but another person passed first over the road, and it was she who was the victim. Jeanne, distressed at seeing the sick woman, confessed to her that she had caused her misfortune and promised to cure her, but she could not do as she wished for she was then arrested and thrown into prison. They questioned her; she confessed that she was a sorcerer, and was condemned to be burned alive. She was executed on the last day of April in the year 1578."

"How is that? She was a sorcerer and she let them burn her?" said Blanche with astonishment.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"How funny that is, and what use was it to her to be a sorcerer then?"

"Blanche you are far too young to argue like that," said Marguerite.

"And the devil, did they burn him also?"

"No, mademoiselle, they could not do that."

"That's a pity, for then we should not need to be afraid of him. Perhaps the devil has been burned now."

"The demon will always exist, my child!"

"You've told me, dear nurse, that St. Michael fought with him and vanquished him."

"Yes, of course he vanquished him, but that is as if he had done nothing. Now, Ursule, go on; for I do not yet see in all that you have told us

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anything relating to yourself, since this Jeanne was burned close on sixty years ago."

"I am coming to it, mademoiselle," said Urbain, recalling his ideas, which Blanche's beautiful eyes had turned to other things than sorcery. "Since the time of Jeanne Harviliers, they talk of nothing in Verberie and its neighborhood except the witches' sabbaths which were held at the Pont-aux-Reine on the highway to Compèigne, in the wood of Ajeux; and where noises were heard of horsemen riding in squads, witches going to their sabbaths, and wizards of all kinds. The good inhabitants of the country, wishing to put themselves on their guard against these emissaries of the devil, went to Charlemagne's chapel, which is now known as the church of Saint-Pierre, and asked the good religious to give them something which would guarantee them against sorceries of all kinds."

"A very good idea, truly," said Marguerite, "they could not have acted more wisely, and what did they give them, my child?"

"The good fathers gave them a robe which had been worn by a pious hermit, who during his life had always made the demons flee from any place where he came. A tiny morsel of that robe was sufficient to ward off all danger from the one who carried it. You may imagine how anxious everybody was to have a piece of it."

"Oh, I can well believe it. If I had been there

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there's nothing I wouldn't have given to obtain a piece."

"Well but dear nurse," said Blanche, "is it like mine."

"Hush! let Ursule finish, my child!"

"Finally, mademoiselle, one of my ancestors, who lived then had the good fortune to get a morsel of the pious hermit's robe. She left it to her daughter after her, who left it to my mother, from whom I have it; and that is how this talisman came to me and it is that which makes me afraid of nothing in Paris, and with which I dare risk myself alone in the streets at night."

"Oh, how singular!" cried Blanche, "that's like me; I also have a talisman which preserves me from all danger, however, they won't even let me look out of the window. That's because my protector, the barber, does not believe in talismans."

"He's very wrong, mademoiselle," said Urbain.

"Yes, assuredly he is," said Marguerite, "but, my dear child, have you yours on you now?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. Oh, I always carry it."

"Let us see this precious relic. Only to touch it will do one good."

Urbain felt in his apron pocket and drew forth a small paper folded with great care; he opened it and took out a sample of his breeches which he presented to the old servant, pinching his lips to keep a serious face. Marguerite who had put on

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her glasses took the little scrap of cloth respectfully, and kissed it three times, crying, —

"That's it, oh, how good that is! that emits an odor all about it, an odor of sanctity."

"Do you think so, dear nurse," said Blanche, who was looking at the little sample of cloth in surprise, "I should never have thought that a little rag like that could have any power."

"A rag! O my dear Blanche, speak more respectfully of this relic."

"My talisman is much prettier than that. It's a little piece of parchment. Wait, here it is." Saying these words Blanche opened her kerchief, and signed to Urbain to look in her corset, half disclosing her virgin neck as she spoke, in order that the supposed Ursule might better perceive her talisman.

"Ah, how charming!" exclaimed Urbain involuntarily.

"Is it not," said Blanche, smiling; "it's much prettier than that scrap of cloth."

Urbain had no strength with which to answer, he remained motionless, his eyes still fixed on the place where the lovely child hid her talisman, while Marguerite, contemplating the fragment of smallclothes, kissed it anew, repeating, —

"The worth of that has been well proven, which makes it all the more precious."

Blanche fastened her kerchief, and Urbain, still moved by what he had seen, sighed deeply.

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"What is the matter with you," said the young girl, looking with interest at her whom she believed to be a simple country girl. "You seem grieved."

"Alas, mademoiselle! I was remembering that I was alone and without resources in this city, that I have no parents, no friends."

"Poor girl! Well, we will be your friends. Yes, I feel that I love you already, Ursule."

"Can it be mademoiselle? Ah! if it were only true!"

"Why do you say if it were true? I never say what is untrue; but what I feel I say at once. Isn't that natural? And do you think that you can love me also?"

"Can I love you," said Urbain, warmly; then remembering that Marguerite was there, he resumed less forcibly, but with an accent that came from his heart, —

"Yes, yes, mademoiselle, and all my life."

"Oh, it is so nice to have a friend of one's own age," said Blanche, shaking the bachelor's hand. "At least I shall have some one with whom I can laugh and chat. Marguerite likes to talk very well, but she never laughs and then she never talks of anything but magic and the devil. We shall find other things to talk about, shan't we, Ursule?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"I know very little about anything; always

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alone in my room, never going out, though I have a great desire to do so; my protector never comes to chat with me; I receive visits from one man only."

"From a man?" said Urbain, anxiously.

"Yes, my music master. Formerly he made me laugh, now he wearies me, for he always sings the same thing to me."

Urbain breathed more freely, and resumed,—

"You sing, mademoiselle?"

"A little," said Blanche, "and do you sing, Ursule?"

"Sometimes."

"That's better still. You shall teach me the songs of your country and I will teach you the ones that I know."

"You will let me come to see you again, then, mademoiselle?"

"Certainly, every evening, if you can. Remember that I am very lonely by myself, in place of which I shall amuse myself with you. She can come to see us every evening, Marguerite, can't she? M. Touquet won't be angry, will he?"

Marguerite during this conversation had remained in meditation and in ecstasy before Ursule's talisman. She would have given all the world to possess it in her new room, where she had much trouble in going to sleep, but the name of her master drew her from these reflections and she cried,—

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"What are you saying about M. Touquet; that he knows we are receiving this young girl without his permission? Oh, no, indeed!"

"But, dear nurse, that's why it is necessary to ask him."

"Ah, mademoiselle," said Urbain, "he will refuse it, and I shall be deprived of the pleasure of seeing you."

"In that case we will say nothing; but if he would take you into his service?"

"Monsieur does not wish to have anybody else in the house. What could Ursule do here?"

"It's a pity, for Ursule must find a place to earn her living; how very disagreeable it is to have a talisman which preserves you from all danger and allows you to die of hunger. It's exactly like mine."

"Oh, I still have time to wait. I have a prospect of something before me," said Urbain, "and my expenses are so very little."

"Had your ancestors ever any occasion to prove the virtue of this talisman?" said Marguerite."

"Yes, mademoiselle, many circumstances prove that, and, above all, my mother had a very strange adventure."

"An adventure," said the old woman, drawing her chair to the hearth. At this moment the church clock struck nine. "O heavens! nine o'clock," said Marguerite, "it is very late; you

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must go, my child. If my master perceives that we have not gone to bed he'll want to know the reason; come, it's necessary to part."

"And that adventure which she is going to tell us," said Blanche.

"That will be for tomorrow, if you will permit it," said Urbain.

"Oh, yes, tomorrow. Can she not come tomorrow, dear nurse."

"So be it," said Marguerite, who was also curious to hear it. "But remember to be prudent, Ursule, that nobody may know."

"Oh, I'll answer to you for my silence, mademoiselle."

"That's well. Wait, here is your talisman. Take care not to lose it. Good heavens! how happy I should be if I had a similar one."

Urbain received the little scrap of cloth, dropping a curtsey and putting it in his pocket, while Marguerite took a lamp to lead him.

"You are going alone," said Blanche, "perhaps a long distance."

"To the Porte Saint-Antoine."

"O heavens! and are you not afraid to be in the street so late?"

"Has she not her talisman?" said Marguerite.

"Ah, that is true; I shan't think about it any more. Good-by, Ursule, you'll come back tomorrow, will you not?"

The lovely child held out her hand to Urbain,

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who was about to carry it to his lips, but remembering that he was a woman he was obliged to content himself with pressing it tenderly and followed Marguerite, after glancing sweetly at Blanche. The old woman reconducted him with the same precaution she had taken in introducing him, and closed the street door softly, saying to him, —

"Good-by till tomorrow, and be sure to take good care of your talisman."

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CHAPTER XV

Love and Innocence. A Shower of Rain and the Talisman

Urbain reëntered his old dwelling in a state of rapture and intoxication difficult of description. The sight of Blanche, the sound of her sweet voice, her charm, her youthful candor, her touching grace and simplicity, had increased his love; what he had seen of the beautiful girl, had immeasurably exceeded the expectations he had formed of her, from the slight glimpse he had obtained of her on the previous occasion, heightened though it was by a lover's imagination; and when he now reflected that he should see her again on the morrow, — on many morrows, perhaps — that he should hear her and speak to her again, that her soft hand would again rest without fear in his, he could hardly contain himself.

And yet he could not but feel what a pity it was that he could not confess to the lovely child his real identity and the feeling with which she had inspired him, at first sight. For Urbain was painfully conscious that he must not hurry the disclosure of his secret for fear of alarming the timid girl, and that he should first seek to win Blanche's confi-

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fidence; in his feminine costume that would be very easy, she had already said that she loved him. It is true that the confession of this sentiment was made to Ursule, but, in fact, it was Urbain who had inspired her with it.

During the day the bachelor resumed his masculine garments, and as soon as night returned he attired himself in his feminine costume, in which he had already begun to acquire more ease of manner; besides, the young servant was always ready to help the youth when he wished to disguise himself, she was very obliging to him, and did not neglect to give him lessons. Urbain profited by them, because a young man understands better how to tear a kerchief than to put it on, and a youth who is foolishly in love has many grave distractions, so that the help of the young servant was very necessary to him. Urbain was very prompt at his rendezvous, and Marguerite introduced him with the same ceremonial as on the evening before. Blanche gave him a most amiable welcome. She went to meet him, and as he was making her a modest curtsey the artless child kissed him on each cheek. Urbain was overwhelmed and in the ardor of his joy, had not the voice of Marguerite recalled him to himself, he would have pressed Blanche to his heart, and would have returned a hundredfold the kisses he had received. But the old woman, always eager to hear a story of extraordinary adventures, particu-

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larly when it related to a talisman, pushed Urbain to the side of the hearth, and said, —

"Come, children, don't waste time with idle ceremony; you know how quickly it passes when one is relating interesting things. Let us sit down and Ursule will tell us the adventure which her mother experienced."

Urbain, still much moved by Blanche's kiss, began a story which he had composed in the morning, and which delighted Marguerite, because it proved the marvellous powers of the talisman. The story finished, the old woman asked to be allowed to look at the relic; she was persuaded that after having touched it the evening before she ran less danger during the night in her room. Blanche then chatted with Urbain and sang to him in a low tone one of the songs which she knew. The ingenuous child had only known the pretended Ursule since the evening before, but she already regarded her as a sister, called her "my dear," and related to her all that concerned herself; for Blanche, brought up in retirement, had not learned to hide her feelings or to feign those which she did not experience; her heart was pure and her words were only the expression of what she felt.

Blanche did not fail to sing to Urbain her favorite refrain, and the latter trembled with pleasure on seeing that, despite the precautions of the barber, his accents were graven on Blanche's memory, who said to him, —

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"The first time that I heard you speak, it seemed to me that I still heard the voice which had sung at night under my window. That was a very pretty voice, and yours, Ursule, resembles it a little. What a pity that you don't know the romance that they were singing."

"I do know it," said Urbain; "at least I think I know it, for I have often heard it sung, and that makes me remember it."

"How fortunate! Sing it to me, Ursule, I beg."

"But if M. Touquet—"

"Oh, he is in his room; besides, you can sing very low. Wait! Just as I expected, Marguerite is asleep; now she won't be able to scold us."

In fact her deep contemplation of the little scrap of Urbain's smallclothes had put the old servant to sleep. Urbain was almost alone with her he adored. His heart palpitated with joy, long sighs issued from his breast, and he was obliged to turn away his eyes that they might not meet Blanche's adorable gaze.

"Well, now," said the amiable girl, pouting a little, which rendered her still more seductive, "aren't you going to sing to me? That would be very naughty, for it would give me a great deal of pleasure to hear that song. I should like to learn it myself. I beg of you, Ursule; you see Marguerite is asleep; come, don't refuse me."

"I refuse you anything? Of course I'll sing for you, mademoiselle."

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"Oh, you are very obliging, and I will kiss you with a good heart."

Urbain needed not the temptation of so sweet a recompense. However, he wished immediately to deserve it. He sang, and Blanche listened with rapture; the young man, yielding to the emotion of his heart, sang with much expression and feeling, but his voice no longer resembled that of a woman, and any other than the ingenuous Blanche would have perceived the change; but the latter was far from suspecting the truth, and with her head turned towards Urbain, remained motionless, her eyes fixed on him and seeming to fear lest she should lose a word, while she exclaimed from time to time, —

"Mon Dieu, that is it! that's the same thing! That affects me just as it did the other night. Ah, Ursule, sing again."

However, the songs ceased, for Urbain had not forgotten the promised recompense. For some moments Blanche remained motionless, seeming to be listening still; at last she aroused herself from her ecstasies, saying, —

"It's very singular what a strange effect that romance has upon me."

"Is it disagreeable?"

"Oh, no; if it were I should not want to be always hearing it, and still it makes me feel rather sad; it makes me sigh; but all the same, Ursule, you will teach it to me, will you not?"

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"Yes, mademoiselle; but you promised me —"

"To kiss you. Oh, I'll do that willingly."

Without further asking, Blanche imprinted her cherry lips on Urbain's burning cheek. This time the latter was about to return her kiss, and had already taken the young girl in his arms when Marguerite, in sneezing, just missed falling into the fire, and awoke herself with a start, crying, —

"Dear good patron saint, save me; I see the black man and the sorcerer of Verberie."

"Where is he, dear nurse?" said Blanche, leaving Urbain, who was vexed that he had not sooner finished his singing.

"Where?" said Marguerite, rubbing her eyes; "where is what? What did I say?"

"You said you saw the sorcerer."

"Ah, that is because I was thinking of him, apparently. Come, Ursule, it is time for you to go, my child."

"That's a pity, I was going to tell you of an adventure which happened to my aunt which was even more marvellous than the others."

"Oh, that's delightful; that will be for tomorrow," said Blanche. "That will suit you, dear nurse, won't it? You see my good friend suspects nothing; besides, if he should see Ursule and be angry, well, I'll take all the blame on myself and I can pacify him."

"Come, then, tomorrow night, and we will learn all about your aunt's adventures."

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"Yes, Mademoiselle Marguerite, but will you have the goodness to give me back my talisman."

"Yes, my dear child, that's right. O my God! what have I done with it? Has Satan tricked me out of it? I was holding it just this minute."

"Wait, dear nurse, here it is," pointing to the hearth, "you have let it fall in the cinders."

"Faith, so I did," answered the old woman, picking up the little scrap of cloth. "Oh, my goodness! it's a little scorched."

"Oh, that's all right, mademoiselle," said Urbain, "that won't have taken away any of its virtue."

"No, assuredly not, my dear child, and if it had been burned its ashes would have retained the same properties."

Urbain took his talisman, said "good-by" to Blanche, repeating to her, "I shall see you, tomorrow," and left the barber's house.

Several days rolled away and every evening the young bachelor had the good fortune to see Blanche. He was incessantly inventing new stories to pique Marguerite's curiosity, and the old woman regularly opened the door of the alley at seven o'clock. The fictitious Ursule's presence had become necessary to Blanche and Marguerite. The latter experienced great pleasure in hearing her relate the doings of the magicians, and the young girl in learning her cherished romance; but Marguerite did not always go to sleep, and

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even when she was awake Blanche wished Urbain to sing; the latter obeyed her, but in order to prevent the old woman from suspecting him he was careful to disguise his voice, and Blanche exclaimed with vexation, —

"That's not at all good! You don't sing so prettily as usual today, and it doesn't give me the same pleasure."

While Urbain was elated with the happiness of seeing Blanche, and drinking from her eyes the sweetest sentiment; while the young girl was giving herself, without restraint, to the pleasure which Ursule's society afforded her, and in confiding to the latter her slightest thoughts; and while old Marguerite, her head filled with frightful stories and miraculous deeds done by the sorcerer of Verberie, was securing herself against the snares of Satan by rubbing between her fingers every evening the little scrap of the bachelor's breeches, — what was passing in the little house of the Vallée Fécamp? was the brilliant Julia still there? and was the Marquis de Villebelle taking the trouble to feign a little love in order to subdue the young Italian.

The barber, having received the price of his services, disquieted himself very little as to what was passing in the small house. Chaudoreille, who never left the gambling-houses while he had money in his pocket, had not appeared at the barber's for a month, but at the end of that time he appeared

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at his friend's towards the middle of the day. The Gascon's face was longer then usual. His ruff, all in rags, had been stained in several places, and the feather on his hat had been replaced by the gold-colored rosette which formerly decorated Rolande's handle. Chaudoreille's piteous face made the barber smile.

"Where do you come from," said he, "and what have you been doing since I saw you last?"

"I've been very unfortunate," said Chaudoreille, heaving a big sigh, and drawing from his belt the old silk purse, which he shook without producing a single sou. "You see, my friend, I'm reduced to zero."

"How's that? do you mean to say that nothing remains to you of the sum I gave you."

"Not a penny, my dear fellow. I've been robbed in a shameful manner."

"That is to say, you have been gambling."

"Yes, that's true; I've played, but with robbers. They have tricked me in an infamous fashion. If, at least, they had been amiable about it, one knows well that among people accustomed to play there are a thousand little ways in which one can make fortune favorable, but to despoil a friend, a comrade — it's horrible! I'll never play again in my life. Say now, don't you want me to go to the little house to see my dear friend Marcel?"

"On the contrary, I forbid you to do so.

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Without the marquis' order nobody should allow himself to go there."

"That's vexatious, and how did the adventure end?"

"What does that matter to you? For the matter of that I have not seen the marquis again, but from the moment I ceased to be employed the intrigue was nothing to me; besides, it will end like all the others. It is a caprice which will last for some days and will be succeeded by another."

"That's correct; but the little one appeared to me to have some strength of mind. She said some very peculiar things to me; she asked me, among other things, if I knew your parents."

"My parents," said the barber, with visible emotion, "that's singular."

"Yes, very singular. I told her you were from Lorraine and that that was all I knew about you."

"My parents," repeated Touquet, striding about the room. "I am almost certain that I have none. My poor father is undoubtedly dead. Oh, I was a very worthless fellow in my youth! Precocious in my passions, a taste for play and a thirst for gold caused me to commit a thousand excesses."

"Yes, the follies of youth. I know all about that. As for me at six years old I was flogged for having stolen a leg of mutton out of the dripping-pan. At ten for having, in a fit of abstraction, taken my grandmother's purse to go and play at little quoits; at twelve years old I took a rabbit

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off the spit and put in its place my old aunt's cat; but in my ardor to hide my larceny I forgot to skin the cat, which was roasted with its hair on. Happily my father was short-sighted, and he thought it was a little wild boar; at fifteen years —"

"What does it matter what you did?" cried the barber, impatiently. "Did the young woman say anything else about me?"

"No, but if you like, I'll go and draw it from her, adroitly."

"Idiot! you forget that she is the marquis' mistress? When her reign is ended I shall see her, and I shall know." The barber said nothing further and would not answer Chaudoreille, and the latter, after having uselessly repeated several times that he had been fasting since the evening before, on perceiving that Touquet paid him no attention left the shop in an ill-humor, murmuring between his teeth, —

"People who become rich are always niggardly and stingy. That's a fault that I shall never have."

Some hours after this conversation, the barber, returning to his customers, met near the Louvre the brilliant Villebelle, who, wrapped in his mantle, seemed to be still in high feather.

"I have succeeded, my dear fellow," said he, drawing Touquet under a portico, where no one could hear them. "Julia has given herself to me;

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but truly the conquest was more difficult than I had thought. The young girl is passionate, romantic; she wishes to be loved, and I have made her believe that I love her. In fact her singular character, her pride, united with her tenderness, her strange conduct, and her speeches, nearly enthralled me. She spoke to me about Estrelle. I don't know how she knew that adventure."

"The young girl knows everything, evidently," said the barber to himself.

"For the rest," resumed the marquis, "she doesn't seem to love you much, my dear Touquet; you are in her black books. She says that you are a master knave."

"What, monseigneur?"

"She refuses my presents; she wishes nothing but my love, it's truly superb. Despite that, I am living with her; I did not care for her to remain in the little house, that would have embarrassed me. I believe upon my honor that I love her a little. But I see two very pretty women going into the jewelry shop down there. I must go there in order to see them nearer." While saying these words the marquis departed hastily, and the barber returned home, thinking of Julia and vexed that he had not learned from the marquis where he had lodged his young Italian.

Chaudoreille had left Touquet's house in a very bad humor. An empty stomach is usually accompanied by a melancholy spirit. The Gascon cheva-

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lier while making philosophical reflections on the egotism of man, the caprice of fortune and the manner in which one could win at piquet while slipping the aces to the bottom of the pack, arrived at the Saint Germain fair. Beside the different spectacles assembled in this place to attract idlers, strangers and young gentlemen came there to play different games of cards, of dice, ninepins and skittles.

Chaudoreille walked among the groups formed around these games and looked with a hungry eye at the pastry exposed before the booths. He stopped near the eating places trying to breathe at least the odor of the cooking, but such delights have no power to fill an empty stomach.

"By jingo!" said Chaudoreille all of a sudden, pulling his hat down over his eyes and pulling his ruff up about his neck. "It shall not be said that I did not dine. A man of genius always has resources, and his wit should furnish him that which his purse refuses."

Immediately the chevalier, walking with a determined step, threaded the crowd and turned towards the neighborhood where some young provincials were playing skittles and drinking white wine. Chaudoreille looked at them out of the corner of his eye then, seizing his moment, he crossed the place where they were playing, in such a manner as to receive a blow upon the legs from a ball which one of the players was rolling.

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"Look out! look out!" cried the young man who had hurled the ball; but Chaudoreille pretended not to hear and stopped only when he was struck. He made a horrible grimace on receiving the blow, and fell, murmuring,—

"Zounds! my dinner will cost me dearly."

The two players came up to him and picked him up, offering their excuses although they were not in the wrong. But Chaudoreille was so pale and appeared to suffer so deeply and made such pitiful contortions that the two young men were much moved; first they offered him a glass of wine to restore him. The wounded man accepted and drank three glasses, one after the other; he could not yet walk and they proposed to him to go into the wine merchant's, who would give him something to eat. He did not allow them to repeat the invitation; the two provincials ordered dinner and invited Chaudoreille to be of their party. Our man was therefore installed at a table with them, ate and drank for four, gave them some lessons in skittles, and perceiving that they were novices of an obliging humor, and not quarrelsome, he rose at the conclusion of the dessert and demanded a pistole from them to indemnify him for the stroke of the ball which they had given him.

The young men looked at him in surprise, perceiving that they had been duped and that they had entered into conversation with a gentleman of

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very little delicacy. Chaudoreille held himself very upright, his left hand on his hip and his right hand caressing the handle of his sword, rolling his eyes like the damned, while passing the end of his tongue over his mustaches. The poor provincials, not caring to have a duel with a man who appeared to have decided to split everyone in two if they did not satisfy him, hastened to present the sum demanded by their amiable guest. The latter received it with a gracious smile, then, with the tone of a man delighted with himself, he bowed to them, saying, —

"Good-by, my young friends, try to remember the strokes which I have taught you."

While saying these words the chevalier quickly departed, no longer remembering the blow which he had received. With a full stomach and a pistole in his belt, Chaudoreille was very well pleased with his day's work. The white wine which he had drunk had aroused his enterprise and inclined him to undertake some adventures. He felt especially carried towards love, but if it is the custom of Bacchus to render one enterprising, the odor of wine and the speech of a tipsy man are not auxiliaries favorable to love. It had been dark for some time when Chaudoreille left the fair, ogling all the women whom he met and murmuring between his teeth, —

"By jingo! I must make a conquest this evening. I am beginning to get tired of my portress,

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who is forty-five years old and has one leg shorter than the other; it is true that she overwhelms me with kindnesses. She bleaches my linen and repairs my ruff; but what does a little infidelity by the way matter, my Venus will know nothing about it."

Chaudoreille had reached the Rue Montmartre when he saw a woman pass by him, dressed like a country woman. She was alone; the chevalier ogled her and turned back to follow her. The carriage of the dame had something very decided about it, which was pleasing to Chaudoreille; but she walked with such long steps that he was obliged to run to follow her. On reaching her side the gallant tried to enter into conversation with her by making one of those pretty propositions in use among those gentlemen who make love in the streets, and seek their conquests by lantern light. She did not answer Chaudoreille, but walked faster. Our man was not at all abashed; he continued to trot by her side doing the amiable, puting his feet in the streams, which he did not see, and splashing his beauty while whispering sweet nothings. However, the person whom he was following had reached the Rue Saint-Honoré, a short distance from the Rue des Bourdonnais. Chaudoreille, receiving no answer, and seeing that nothing was to be gained by his compliments, decided to attempt strong measures. He approached the country woman and pinched her sharply, and

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received in return a slap in the face, so well applied that it sent him up against a stone post four feet away.

Urbain was going according to his custom to visit Blanche, when on the way he made the conquest of Chaudoreille. After disengaging himself in so heroic a manner the young bachelor ran up to the barber's house, entering the passageway, where some one came immediately to open to him, and reached Blanche, still much agitated by the adventure.

"What is the matter with you, my dear Ursule?" said Blanche. "You seem excited."

"Just now in the street two men fighting frightened me."

"Poor child, but didn't you have your talisman?"

"Oh, yes, but in spite of that I was afraid."

"I can well believe it," said Blanche, "to see men fighting must be very unpleasant. Come, sit down, my dear friend."

Blanche's sweet words soon made Urbain forget his adventure. According to his promise, it was necessary that he should recount something singular which had happened to one of his cousins. He had promised to recite it the evening before, and Marguerite was in a hurry to hear it. The old servant needed distraction; she had had a frightful dream in the night and in the morning when she awakened she had seen a bat against her

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window, all of which was very disquieting, and since the morning she had not been easy.

Urbain commenced his story. He was interrupted by the rain, which fell in torrents, and which the wind blew violently against the panes.

"What horrible weather!" said Blanche.

"Yes," said Marguerite, drawing closer to the fire at each gust of wind, "this night will be difficult to pass. I do not know, but it seems to me that something extraordinary is going to happen; that bat that I saw — and in my dream all those people were riding to the sabbath on broomsticks. That surely indicates something."

"Certainly," said Urbain, and the old woman, to reassure herself, rubbed the talisman between her hands.

Urbain's story had lasted for a long time. Marguerite, however, had said nothing, as she was not anxious to go upstairs to bed. Blanche, who never saw Ursule leave without regret, had taken care not to observe that it was getting late and the young bachelor was not the one who would first think of breaking up the party. However, the clock struck, and they counted eleven strokes.

"O heavens! eleven o'clock," cried Blanche.

"O my God!" said Marguerite, trembling, "in an hour it will be midnight."

"But, dear nurse, Ursule cannot go so late and besides by the time she gets there — Wait! do you hear the rain, it is falling in torrents. How

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can she go to the Porte Saint-Antoine in such weather as this? It's impossible."

"It is certain," said Urbain, "that the roads are very bad. There are no lanterns and often one puts one's foot in holes that one does not see."

"Poor Ursule, her talisman will not prevent her from being drenched, will it?"

"It is true it doesn't guarantee one against the effect of rain," responded Urbain, sighing.

"What is to be done?" said Marguerite.

"It's very easy, my dear nurse, Ursule can sleep with me, and tomorrow, as soon as day breaks, she can go without making a noise. Will you, Ursule?"

Urbain was for some moments unable to answer, for these words of Blanche, "She can sleep with me," had so disturbed his whole being that he did not know what he was doing. At last he murmured in a changed voice, —

"If you think well of it, mademoiselle, I think well of it also."

"Most certainly I wish it, do I not dear nurse? We could not let her go out at this time of night. Why don't you answer?"

Marguerite saw no harm in the country woman's sleeping with Blanche, but rather hoped to gain an advantage thereby in keeping all night the precious relic; and, as her mind had been struck with the idea that some misfortune was going to happen to her, the possession of the little scrap of

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cloth seemed to her like a benefaction of Providence.

"It's true," said she, at last, "that the weather is frightful, and if Ursule will not forget to go away before daybreak —"

"Oh, yes, dear nurse, and if she is asleep I promise you I will wake her."

"Very well, then I'm willing that she should remain."

"Oh, how delightful," said Blanche, "we shall sleep together, Ursule. I have never slept with anyone. How we shall chat and laugh."

"No, indeed, no, indeed," said Marguerite; "on the contrary you must go to sleep without making any noise that monsieur could hear."

"Very well, we will go to sleep, dear nurse," responded the amiable child, and she added in Urbain's ear, "We will talk very low."

"Well, in that case I will go to bed," said the old servant hesitating to return that which she held in her hand. "My dear Ursule," she said at last, "you have nothing to fear here. If you would permit me to keep your talisman for this night only, because I sleep in a room that is not safe and I can't get that bat out of my head."

"Oh, keep it, Mademoiselle Marguerite," said Urbain, "may it do you much pleasure."

"Yes, keep it, dear nurse," said Blanche, "besides we have mine, that will be enough for us, will it not, Ursule?"

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"But — yes, I believe so, mademoiselle."

Marguerite, delighted to possess a safeguard for the whole night, lighted her lamp and turned towards the door, saying, —

"Good night, my children, good night. Mercy, what a gust of wind. Ursule, you must go tomorrow before daybreak."

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Go to bed as quickly as possible, and extinguish your light, that no one may suspect anything."

"Be easy, dear nurse," said Blanche, "we'll soon put it out."

Marguerite took her lamp and left the room. Blanche closed the door after her.

"Shut your door tight," said the old woman.

"Yes, dear nurse," answered the young girl, and she drew the bolt.

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CHAPTER XVI

How Will It End

When one loves ardently, and when one sees that moment approach which heralds the consummation of his dearest wishes, when one is for the first time entirely alone with the beloved of his heart, one experiences an uneasiness, an agitation which one cannot quell, and which one cannot reasonably account for; it is almost as though one feared that one's being would be unable to support the realization of this exquisite happiness, as though one doubted whether hopes so sweet, and which have hitherto been so unattainable, can ever be realized.

It is, above all, when one loves with the candor and good faith of early youth that one yields himself tremblingly to the first interview which sounds a knell to all the cherished past. Why, at the very moment of happiness, should one sigh and fear? Poor mortals, it seems that accustomed to sorrow, we shall always be astonished at being happy. In truth, this astonishment passes with age and experience; then these delightful rendezvous do not cause us the same emotion; we regard them only as distractions, and laugh at the uneasiness, the

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embarrassment, which accompanied our first intercourse with the ladies. Ungrateful that we are, we mock at the source of our happiness, at those sweet sensations which time has dissipated, with all the other illusions of our youth, after the manner of the fox in the fable.

"How awkward we were at eighteen years of age," we say; "how embarrassed and constrained in a tête-à-tête, trembling like a leaf as we went to the rendezvous; what a difference now, we go to them singing, we reach that which we desire more quickly, we are a hundred times more pleasing." Yes, but our hair is becoming grizzly, our figure has become rotund, and some rather deep lines are imprinted at the corners of our eyes.

If the approach of long-desired happiness causes in love an inexplicable trouble, what should be the state of one who, all of a sudden, without having had even the slightest hope, finds himself in a position where he may obtain the greatest heights. Such was Urbain's situation; he loved Blanche with the delirium, the intoxication, which one experiences at nineteen for his first love, and he found himself at eleven o'clock at night alone with the object of his tenderness in a little chamber, separated from all neighbors, with the lovely child drawing the bolt and beginning to undress herself to go to bed. What lover at such a moment could preserve his reason? Poor Blanche, I tremble for thee! In truth thou hast a talisman, but I have

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no great faith in its power; above all, if you allow yourself to remain with Urbain in the situation in which he is placed. The young bachelor tremblingly paused, sighing and saying not a word he remained standing in a corner of the room, while Blanche prepared the bed, coming and going, jumping and laughing, and finally began to undress herself.

"O heavens!" said Urbain to himself, trembling, coloring, and lowering his eyes, but raising them from time to time to look at Blanche. "O my God! what must I do. This is not the moment to declare myself, to make known to her who I am, to implore her pardon, and to confess my love to her; but, yes, it is indeed the moment. However, if that confession should frighten her, if her cries should bring somebody here, or if she should drive me from the room. That will be such a pity when I can, by deceiving her a little longer, share her bed, and — oh, no! that would be very ill done! But how pretty she is! great God, how charming! Ah, I will not look at her." And the rascal looked at her all the time, slyly, it is true, but the more he looked at her the more he felt his resolution imperilled; for each moment Blanche took off some part of her costume, already only a little petticoat covered her seductive form, and the straight corset which had imprisoned her pretty figure was laid upon the bed.

Blanche stopped; however, it was time. She

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looked at Urbain, who was still standing there, motionless and silent.

"Come, Ursule, why don't you undress yourself?" said the young girl, approaching the bachelor.

"Because, mademoiselle, I do not know why, I'm afraid."

"What? you're afraid? Are you afraid with me, Ursule?"

"Afraid, mademoiselle? Yes, I feel that I am very much afraid."

"Why, that's just like Marguerite, and I, who am much younger, am a great deal braver. It is true that the wind blows very hard, but it won't carry us away from here. How she trembles! Why Ursule, how can you go every evening alone as far as the Porte Saint-Antoine and yet you tremble with me in my chamber."

"Ah, that's very different."

"Is it because Marguerite has carried off your talisman? But we still have mine. Wait, do you see when I take off my corsets I fasten it here, inside my chemise, for dear nurse says that it is necessary above all to have it during the night, and that it is when they are in bed that the sorcerers come to torment young girls. Is that true, Ursule? Do they sometimes try to torment you in the night?"

"Yes — no, mademoiselle." Urbain did not know what he was saying, for his eyes, despite

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himself, turned towards the perfidious talisman which seemed to be there, like the serpent on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to make him succumb to temptation.

"You are shivering with cold, Ursule, we shall be much better in bed; we shall be warmer. Do you want me to help you undress? How you are sighing. Is it because you are in some trouble? You must tell me all about it. It is so pleasant to have some friend, to be able to tell her all that one thinks. Let's see; first, we'll take off this cap which hides all your face. I am sure that mine will become you better, let us try it. But sit down first; you're so big, my dear Ursule, that I can't reach your head."

The young bachelor allowed himself to be led to a chair. He seated himself, and the lovely child, standing before him, began to loosen the pins which held his cap and his big brown curls. Urbain allowed Blanche to take off his headdress. He had decided to make himself known, besides sooner or later she must know the truth, and in order not to frighten her it was better that the metamorphosis should be gently made. The last pin was taken out, Blanche lifted the cap and the young man's brown curls escaped on all sides and fell on his forehead and on his neck. The young girl uttered an exclamation and stopped. Urbain, fearing already that she was about to fly, lightly surrounded her waist with his two arms.

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The young bachelor allowed himself to be led to a chair.

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"How funny that is," said Blanche, at last, looking at Urbain with astonishment. "Your hair isn't done at all like that of all the women I ever saw. Is it the fashion to wear it like that in Verberie?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Do you know, Ursule, that the more I look at you the more you look like a man to me."

"Somebody told me that before, mademoiselle."

"But it's really astonishing. Your hair is dressed exactly like that of the men I see passing in the street."

"Do you dislike it so?"

"No — however — it produces a very singular effect on me."

"If I were a man would you be angry?"

"Mercy, yes, I believe I should, for then you couldn't be my friend any more. I couldn't love you as a sister."

"But Blanche, if I were a man I should be your lover. A most tender, a most faithful lover. I could love you to distraction, and love is much stronger than friendship. Then, if you will share my affection, could there exist a mortal happier than I? Dear Blanche, if I could only possess your heart. Is there anything more precious on earth? To obtain it, I would give the last drop of my blood."

While speaking Urbain, engrossed by his love, no longer sought to disguise his voice. His arms

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still surrounded Blanche and the young girl, greatly moved, dropped on the knees of the young bachelor, saying in a feeble voice, —

"Mon Dieu, Ursule, don't say such things to me. They make me uneasy. I don't know what's the matter with me. I feel that I wish to cry. What use is it to tell such falsehoods, to speak of love and of loving? Ursule, somebody has told me that it is very wrong to talk about those things. O heavens! since you haven't your cap on, I dare not look at you."

"Blanche! dear Blanche!"

"Well now, you're still pretending to be a man, and it frightens me. Come, Ursule, be a woman again, I beg of you."

"No, Blanche, I will not deceive you further. It is a man — it's — the most tender lover who is near you."

By a sudden movement Blanche rose and escaped to the other end of the room; Urbain did not seek to restrain her, but fell on his knees and held out his hands towards her, seeming to await her forgiveness, while the young girl looked at him with eyes which expressed more surprise than fear.

"What? are you really a man?" said the amiable child, after a moment.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Are you quite sure of it?"

"Oh, yes."

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"O good heavens! don't come near me, I beg of you."

"Ah, don't tremble so, I am at your feet, the most submissive of lovers."

"Of lovers! I don't know what a lover is."

"It was that I might be successful in seeing you, that I might make known to you all the love that I feel for you, that I have dared to take this disguise. Without that how should I have managed to see you when they keep you in prison in this room?"

"I never go out of it. I should not listen to you perhaps. How did you come to love me?"

"It was through the window that I first saw you. Some singers were standing under the casement. You seemed to listen to them with great pleasure. That night I returned and sang under your window the romance which you like so much."

"That was you?" cried Blanche, joyfully; and already forgetting her first fear she looked at Urbain with more assurance. Her pure and innocent mind could not conceive all the danger of her situation. A more experienced young girl would have cried and have shown much anger, but Blanche, whose soul was a stranger to all dissimulation evinced the same confidence in the young bachelor as she did in Ursule, because she had no other thought which could make her blush. "Why! was that you?" she repeated.

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"It isn't astonishing that I found such a resemblance in your voice, but it wasn't good of you, monsieur, to lie to us like that. I was quite sure that you were Ursule and I loved you like a dear friend, and can I continue to love you like that now?"

"And what should prevent you, if I have not displeased you?"

"Oh, no! you haven't displeased me. I even think that you look better without a cap, but it's not allowable to love a man."

"Why not, when that man wishes to become your husband?"

"Marguerite says that all men are deceivers and then, O heavens! the devil also takes the form of a man, and presented himself thus to the sorcerer of Verberie. O mon Dieu, if you should be the devil!"

"O Blanche, what a thought!"

"But no, you look too sweet — you're not all black, and you haven't any claws."

"My name is Urbain Dorgeville. My parents were honest and respected. I am an orphan. I haven't much fortune, but when one loves truly is it necessary to have much in order to be happy? Dear Blanche, will you forgive me?"

"He calls me his dear Blanche, how funny that is! And if I don't forgive you, what will happen?"

"You will reduce me to despair and nothing will remain for me but to die."

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"Oh, I don't wish that you should die," cried the amiable child, "and I will forgive you, for I should be very vexed if I caused you any grief."

"Can it be," said Urbain, rising and running towards Blanche. The young girl made a movement of fear, then, recovering herself, she smiled, and signed to Urbain to seat himself near her. The happy bachelor placed his chair close up to that of Blanche and very gently took one of her hands, which the ingenuous child allowed him to retain.

"You forgive me for loving you, then?" said he, looking at her tenderly.

"Of course, I'm obliged to, since you say that it will make you die if I forbid you to."

"And you, also, will love me?"

"Oh, I don't know. I loved Ursule very much, however, but you—it wouldn't be the same thing, would it?"

"It would be much sweeter."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it, by what I experience at this moment."

"You are very happy now, then?"

"Yes, very happy; for you are no longer afraid of me, are you?"

"No, I am not afraid of you, but why do you hold my hand like that?"

"I should like to press it always, to hold it incessantly against my heart."

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"And is that yet another proof of love?"

"Yes, Blanche, but if it displeases you I will not keep this dear hand."

"Oh, that doesn't displease me, but yours is burning. It makes mine warm. And why are you trembling? Is it love that makes you like that?"

"Yes, it burns me, it consumes me."

"Oh, it must be very unpleasant to love like that."

The young bachelor, to solace, no doubt, the malady which devoured him, carried Blanche's hand to his lips and covered it with kisses. The young girl allowed him to do so, although the passionate glances of her lover were beginning to produce a strange feeling of uneasiness in her heart. Her breast rose more frequently, she sighed, and said in a faint voice, —

"Urbain — Ursule; mon Dieu, I don't know what's the matter with me, but I am afraid I've caught your malady. Wait! see how I am trembling now! Oh, my talisman, my talisman!"

Poor Blanche, what will you do? While promising to himself to respect the virtue of the young girl, Urbain yielded to the ardor which inflamed him, and pressed Blanche tightly in his arms, begging her not to tremble; Blanche, astonished, did not repulse him, for excessive innocence has also its dangers, but at this moment somebody knocked violently at the door of the

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room and the barber's stern voice uttered these words, —

"Open the door, Blanche! I command you to open the door!"

The young bachelor seemed petrified, and Blanche remained motionless in Urbain's arms, which still enfolded her.

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